



SOUTH RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SOUTH RIVER, NEW JERSEY 08882



Dr. Sylvia Zircher
Superintendent

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September 30, 2024

TO: Parents and Guardians
FROM: Dr. Sylvia Zircher- Superintendent
Joseph Shannon-Director of Security and Threat Assessment

SUBJECT: Important Information Regarding School District Communication in Case of School Threats

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this message finds you and your family well. The safety and well-being of our students and staff remain the highest priority of our school district. With this in mind, I would like to inform you about the procedures we have in place to ensure timely and accurate communication with parents and guardians in the event of a credible threat to one of our schools.

Our Communication Process

Please be assured that all threats are investigated as soon as we become aware of them. Threats are investigated by our administration and our state trained Threat Assessment Teams in each of our schools. The South River Police Department is also notified of all threats received by the district. Many of the threats that we investigate are determined to be "transient threats". Meaning that through investigation it is determined that there is no credibility to the threat.

If a threat is deemed to be "substantive" we will communicate important information as quickly as possible to ensure that all families are aware and informed. Furthermore, if during the course of a school day we become aware of a threat or safety situation and it is necessary to place a school into a security protocol such as a lockdown, you will be notified. We will also notify parents when an active investigation is taking place during the school day, and outside resources, such as county support, is necessary for such an investigation.

You can expect us to use the following channels for official district communication:

- **District-Wide Text Alerts:** Sent directly to the mobile phone numbers we have on file.
- **Email:** An email will be sent to all parents and guardians with updates.
- **School Website and Social Media:** Updates may be posted on the district's official website and social media pages.
- **Automated Phone Calls:** If necessary, we will use our automated phone system to reach parents with urgent updates.

We will provide as much information as we are able to share without compromising the safety of students, staff, or the ongoing investigation.

What We Ask of You

In these situations, we understand that your first instinct will be to contact the school or come to the building. However, we kindly ask for your cooperation in allowing our safety teams and law enforcement to manage the situation efficiently. The best way to stay informed is to monitor the communication channels mentioned above.

Additionally, it is critical that we have your most current contact information. If you need to update your phone number or email address, please contact the school office as soon as possible to ensure you receive important alerts.

We strongly discourage you from relying on personal and non-district or SRPD sponsored social media posts for accurate information. In fact, any social media posts that come to our attention and provide inaccurate information that cause unwarranted panic or false public alarm, will be turned into SRPD and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office. If you do not receive any communications directly from our school or SRPD, we consider our schools open and safe to attend.

Safety Protocols and Prevention


Although school has been open now for a few short weeks we are seeing a concerning uptick in inappropriate threatening language used amongst our students particularly in the elementary and middle school grade levels. Please have a conversation with your child regarding the consequences of such words. Any language uttered in the schools or social media pertaining to threatening a student or staff member with violent actions or bringing a weapon to school is never tolerated, and discipline will be administered. At the discretion of the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, there may even be criminal charges filed against students who make these types of threats.

On our end, we are working with the South River Police Department to plan an age appropriate educational program for students regarding school safety and the consequences of using threatening language toward a student or staff member. We are also working on developing a parent information session, available with translation.

We encourage open communication between students, staff, and families to ensure that any concerns or suspicious activities are reported promptly. As a reminder we have implemented a new Anonymous Reporting System, Sandy Hook Promise "Say Something". Ideally we want every student that attends our schools to always feel safe and have a trusted adult within the school environment they can go to if they learn of any situation that may compromise the safety of our schools. We recognize that some students may feel more comfortable to report these types of situations anonymously and they have that mechanism at their disposal to use if needed.

We appreciate your continued support in making our schools safe environments for learning. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to your school principal or the district office.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sylvia Zircher
Superintendent of Schools


Mr. Joseph Shannon
Director of Security and Threat Assessment