



Superintendent's Update

December 2008



Alternate Bus Stop - Important Option for Working Parents

A new policy has been enacted that will allow Middletown parents an important choice if they are relying upon child care providers to get their children to and from school. Working parents have previously requested the option to have their child's bus stop changed from the one nearest their home to the stop nearest the home of a neighbor or relative who is providing child care. That request was denied under the district's former policy. The alternate stop option is now available for parents when students are already determined eligible for transportation.

According to New Jersey statute, elementary students who live more than 2.0 miles from school, secondary students who live more than 2.5 miles from school, or any students who live along a route to school which has been deemed hazardous, can receive transportation. With the new policy, parents can request an alternate bus stop, as long as that stop is scheduled on the same bus route as the home bus stop. The alternate stop must be approved for an entire school year and

cannot be changed, even if the child-care provider changes. Approvals are only for the full week. In other words, the student is picked up and dropped off at the same stop every day.

A separate application has to be submitted to the Transportation Department for every child. Applications can be found on the district website and must be submitted by May 29th for the coming school year. Information regarding bus stops available along applicable routes may be obtained by contacting the Transportation department at (732) 671-3850, ext. 1007. The district reserves the right to discontinue the alternate stop service if the number of students on the bus changes or if the route changes in a manner that may effect the service.



Administrative Changes

Two of the district's buildings will be undergoing a change in leadership within the next month: High School South and Nut Swamp Elementary School.

At High School South, Mr. Mark Kelly is retiring after 31 years of service to the district. Mr. Kelly was a guidance counselor and an Assistant Principal at Thompson Middle School. Then he moved to High School South to become the Assistant Principal

there, ultimately taking on the leadership role as Principal in 2003. Mr. Kelly was just the type of leader High School South needed when he took the helm. His calm, but strong and consistent style was appreciated by staff and students alike, and he brought stability to the building that has continued to thrive. His presence at South will surely be missed.

Ms. Anne Facendo, current Principal of Nut Swamp Ele-

mentary School, has just been selected to be the District Director of the Humanities K-12. The position draws on Ms. Facendo's great strength and knowledge in the area of literacy. She will be overseeing the district's curriculum implementation in Language Arts and Social Studies in Grades Kindergarten through 12, as well as the way reading and writing are taught across all the subject areas.



"Chain of Command" or How to Appropriately Communicate with School Officials

Parents are often discouraged when they attempt to communicate with central office administrators and are sent back to building-based officials in order to resolve a problem their child may be experiencing in school. To prevent that frustration, parents can become informed about the "Chain of Command", or where to begin the communication sequence regarding their child's problem.

The first step in the communication sequence is always with the teaching staff member who is providing the direct service. The staff member who is the most directly involved is the most likely to be able to resolve the problem. The teaching staff member may be a classroom teacher, a service provider (like a speech and language specialist, or a teacher of English as a Second Language), or even a coach. At the secondary level (middle school and high school), where multiple teachers are involved, if the problem is beyond the scope of a single teacher, the guidance counselor should be the first person in the communication sequence. In the case of a student with a disability who has an IEP, the case manager is always the person in charge of communication. Paraprofessionals cannot respond directly to parents regarding the students in their classes, but they can respond under the direction of a certified teaching staff member or administrator.

The best mode of communication is email, and will provide the quickest response. A phone call to the school once the appropriate 4 digit extension is ascertained by contacting the main office, is the next best option. Teachers tend to check their email more regularly than their classroom phone answering machine, but they do check and they will return the call as quickly as possible. Expect a response within 24 hours, unless the message is left on a weekend. If a response is not received, repeat the communication. Sometimes messages are just not retrieved or emails can be missed, especially in times of high volume.

When a parent is not satisfied with the response from the teaching staff member, the next level of communication is the building principal at the elementary level. At the middle school level, the guidance counselor should always be apprised of the problem, before contacting the building principal. In high school, every student has a guidance

counselor and an assistant principal based on the first letter of their child's last name, so they should be contacted sequentially. The building principal should only be involved if satisfaction is not received with the assistant principal.

If the problem cannot be resolved at the building level, central administrators can be contacted based on the presenting problem:

- ◆ Disciplinary matters are referred to the *Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Personnel*.
- ◆ Matters relating to curriculum or program of study, including issues about attaining Honors or Gifted and Talented status, would be referred to the *Office of Curriculum*. The appropriate communication would be through the District Directors of either the Humanities (Language Arts and Social Studies) K-12, located at Thorne Middle School, or Math and Science K-12, located at Bayshore Middle School.
- ◆ Special education issues are addressed through the *Office of Pupil Services* at Central Administration.
- ◆ The final level of appeal on any issue is to the *Office of the Superintendent*. Hopefully, the matter would be resolved long before that level, but bypassing any of the levels on the chain will only result in being sent backward, because those staff members need an opportunity to resolve the issue at their level. Failure of the Superintendent to respond or to resolve a problem to a parent's satisfaction should be the only time a communication should be sent to one or all of the members of our Board of Education.

Our district has good communication processes in place and parents should take advantage of using them to their benefit. As we move forward technologically, we will have more avenues for communicating via the district website, like blogs and discussion boards. Parents should look on the district website for *Frequently Asked Questions*. Documents have been developed on a variety of topics, such as the Random Drug and Alcohol Testing Program or Special Education issues. It's possible that a question has already been asked, answered and published to the website and no further effort to resolve a problem will be needed on the part of a parent.

Important Dates

Monday, December 8 2008:	High School South Prom Contract Meeting (6:30 pm in Library)
Thursday, December 11, 2008:	High School North Prom Contract Meeting (7:00 pm in Library)
Wednesday, December 17, 2008:	Board of Education Voting Meeting (7:30 pm in the High School North Library)
Monday, December 22, 2008:	Secondary Progress Reports Issued
Tuesday, December 23, 2008:	Early Dismissal; Winter Recess Begins (Schools Closed through January 2, 2009)
Monday, January 5, 2009:	Schools Reopen