

Superintendent's Update

Karen L. Bilbao, Interim Superintendent of Schools



**MIDDLETOWN
TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Volume 4 Issue 3

November, 2006

LETTER TO PARENTS POSTED ON DISTRICT WEBSITE

The following letter was posted on the District website on November 2, 2006 to provide more comprehensive information about recent events what have been featured in local news media.

Dear Middletown Parents and Guardians:

This week has been a difficult one for the Middletown Township School District. Your administrative, professional, and support teams, as well as your Board of Education, have worked diligently to ensure that information concerning the events that transpired have been forthcoming as soon as the information is available.

One student was recently hospitalized due to an incident involving the alleged distribution of illegal drugs to this student by a bus aide, who was an employee of one of the bus companies contracted by the District for transportation. Another major incident involved a low-level security threat, which necessitated immediate action by the entire professional team. For both of these incidents, your management team acted quickly, efficiently, and at all times put the safety of our children at the forefront.

What actions were taken? In reviewing the recent events, we learned that a low level threat involved our elementary schools. Immediately, and in consultation with the municipal police and the county prosecutor's office, police were assigned to our buildings and school children were not allowed to participate in activities out of doors. The presence of police and the eventual monitoring of our schools by specifically assigned police officers were done as a precautionary measure only. The downgrade of the concern has been communicated to the Superintendent of the Monmouth Ocean Educational Services Commission and the decision was made to re-open the Latch-Key Programs on November 3, 2006 for both morning and afternoon sessions.

The incident involving the bus aide in question was also of primary concern. That employee should have been subjected to the required criminal history background check but was not. That screening was the obligation of the individual's employer, the bus company, and is required by law. By contract and by law, the bus company must take necessary steps to ensure that all employees are of appropriate moral character to work closely with public school students. The Middletown Township School District is taking immediate steps to ensure that all drivers and aides of all bus companies with which the District has contracts have fulfilled this obligation. In the case of the bus company which did not comply with these requirements, the District is reviewing its legal options with regard to terminating its contractual relationship.

The nursing staff at High School North more than likely saved the life of the pupil involved. These experienced nurses used a defibrillator and other life saving techniques and acted quickly and efficiently to tend to the needs of this student. The student who was involved in this incident is now doing well, and the nursing staff is to be commended for their heroic actions. The Board of Education and the Middletown Township Education Association worked together to purchase defibrillators for all of our buildings and annually provide training on their use.

We will continue to strive for the safety of your children, and while events occur which are often beyond our control, every effort will be made to respond and to be proactive in the most responsible manner.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Bilbao

ONGOING UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS

In order to offer our families and staff with as much information as possible, I would like to provide you with an update on the status of the happenings of the week. As with any ongoing police investigation, information is unfolding with each passing hour. Every effort has been made to follow the advice and recommendations of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office and the Middletown Police so as not to compromise their work and yet be proactive. Let me assure you that this has been the case and at no time has the safety of our children or employees been compromised. Your administrative team was also proactive with the security of the buildings and the well being of our children and staff have always been our paramount concern.

Several meetings were held with the Middletown Police and extensive communications have been shared with another school district, the East Windsor School District, when information was disseminated that they too had received a communication involving a similar security threat. It has just been learned that a communication has been sent to the *Trenton Times*, and that newspaper published the contents, which contained specifics of the threat. At the time of this writing, we are awaiting a statement from the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, which is preparing a statement that will address the communication.

The copy of my letter to parents on the first page was posted on the district web site, and contained information that we were able to share up to November 2nd concerning the threat. We provided all the information that we were able to share according to the direct advice of the police and prosecutor's office. As information is released, we will immediately share it with our community.

CHANNEL 20 SHOW REMINDER

Our Channel 20 show, "Your Town, Your Schools," continues to showcase the vision of the district, as we take you into our classrooms to view important educational initiatives. The show changes every month, so remember to keep watching. Show times are posted on the website, and this month will air at 8:10 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 9:00 p.m.

RANDOM DRUG & ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY APPROVED

The District's policy on Random Drug and Alcohol Testing was approved at the October 23rd Board of Education Meeting. As our Board President, Dawn Diorio, stated at the meeting, "It is a sign of the times that we need to have this policy." The policy was an example of the whole Middletown Community coming together in an expression of the care and concern for the safety of our children. Many parents and students have asked for more information. There is a great deal of information available on the District website about the policy and procedures, along with a Question and Answer Document. Additional questions can be addressed to the High School Administrators and Central Office Administrators.

Though the procedural implementation will be in the high schools, it is important to view the policy as one component of a comprehensive program of Substance Abuse Prevention in Grades K-12. Even the best instruction cannot sustain the impact of drug and alcohol use among our students.

Strategic Planning

All Middletown Community Members are cordially invited to attend the presentations of the Action Plans developed related to the three goal areas of the Strategic Plan:

Environment, Student Achievement, Community.

This presentation is probably the most critical part of the strategic planning process because it brings to fruition all of the subcommittees' work since the inception of the process. It also leads us to the final part of the process: the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

We appreciate your involvement and know as a participant you will want to hear, observe, and pose questions at the November 15, 2006 presentation.

Strategic Planning
Action Plan Presentations
November 15, 2006
7:30 pm
High School North Library