



BERGEN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS / SPECIAL SERVICES

District Administrative Office

540 Farview Avenue, Paramus NJ 07652 · Tel. (201) 343-6000

September 1, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As a District, we are committed to being proactive in doing everything possible to protect our students and staff. Over the years, experience tells us that students rely on and find comfort in adults who can protect them during emergencies. Therefore, we focus on prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery as necessary key elements for crisis planning. Safety has evolved into being a multifaceted District initiative involving continuous communication and effective partnerships with law enforcement, administration, staff, students, and parents.

As per State Law P.L. 2017 c.162 every Superintendent is required to designate an administrator as their School Safety Specialist. As the District's designee, I was trained for this position by the NJ DOE Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning, and participate in multiple security workshops and seminars. My responsibilities include supervising and providing necessary training and oversight for all school safety while serving as a liaison to national, state, and community agencies. These recommended Best Practices have been integrated into our schools' security procedures and protocols to strengthen our security. Additionally, below you will find a synopsis of some of our existing safeguards.

We have a comprehensive School Safety and Security Plan in place and rigorously train staff to handle various emergency situations. On November 1, 2010, as per N.J.S. 18A: 41-1, every school is required to conduct one fire drill and one security drill each month within the school hours including any summer months during which school is open for instructional programs. Students and staff practice and experience what is expected of them during these security drills. Law Enforcement always plays an integral part in our drills and in keeping our students safe. During the academic year, schools are required to:

- conduct a minimum of two of the following Security Drills: Active Shooter; Bomb Threat; Evacuation; and Lockdown
- other types of Security Drills practiced are Shelter in Place; Testing of the Schools Notification System and Procedures; Tabletop Exercise; and Reverse Evacuations
- perform two School Bus Emergency Evacuation Drills as per New Jersey Administrative Code (NJAC 6A:27-11.2)
- all Fire, Security and Bus Evacuation Drills outcomes are reported to the County and certified by our Superintendent, Dr. Howard Lerner

Our current Memorandum of Agreement between the District and law enforcement ensures a cooperative and positive working relationship. We maintain a strong partnership with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, Sheriff's Office, County Fire Marshall, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), EMS, and Bergen County Association of School Security Professionals. Together we have collaborated on the

following:

- updating security procedures for drilling and responding to emergency situations including Evacuation/Reunification Plans
- facilitating District Safety/Security Meetings with campus administration, the Adult Programs, Sheriff's Office and School Resource Officers, Day Care Center - BELA, Operations, OEM, Technology, and Transportation
- training for administration, faculty, bus drivers, and maintenance/custodial staff on Stop the Bleed with EMS
- updating Visitors' Policy and use of campus internal and external digital cameras
- recognizing and addressing the social and emotional needs of students through a variety of programs

Finally, on August 1, 2022, Governor Phil Murphy signed into legislation, N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.4, requiring the establishment of threat assessment teams in schools. The purpose of these teams is to help prevent targeted violence to ensure safer school environments. Our school resource officers play a key role on these teams, and the partnerships we have built with law enforcement and emergency management add a layer of protection to our schools.

As parents, you play an essential role in promoting school safety by following procedures. We realize open communication is critical for the safety and well-being of our community. Should there be an emergency situation, the District will immediately notify you through text, email and phone. Therefore, make sure your contact information is always updated and accurate in your child's school.

Be assured that the safety of your children continues to be our priority. We want them to feel safe, respected, trusted and connected to their school community. In this day and age, we all play a vital role in school safety. We encourage you to talk to your children about safety and security issues at home and in school. Please reinforce to your children the importance of "*if they see or hear something, they need to say something*" to a parent/guardian, administrator, or school staff.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email at brisor@bergen.org. Thank you for your support and cooperation in keeping your children safe.

Sincerely,

Bridget Sorem

Bridget Sorem
School Safety Specialist