



January 13, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian, Students

In the last couple of days, Middletown High School has once again been in the media regarding an unfortunate event. We are sure you are as shocked and saddened as we are by the recent arrest of two adult-aged students on the charge of sexual assault. That this event allegedly occurred in our building after school hours is a matter of great concern to all of us.

Obviously, we cannot comment on any specifics of the case as there is a presumption of innocence and there are laws that protect the privacy of all concerned. Please be assured that we have investigated the incident thoroughly and are cooperating fully with the proper authorities, working with them to help ensure that justice will prevail.

It is important for you to know that we are doing our level best to provide your child with a safe and secure educational setting.

Our security personnel, our teachers, our support staff and the administration make the safety of your child our first priority, and we are reviewing all that we have in place to see where we can improve and strengthen that effort.

We have a good school. The overwhelming majority of our students are terrific and we are proud of them. Our students have achieved in many venues and activities, all of which have been well-documented and are widely known.

However, these events -- if true -- are of the kind that would shake anyone's confidence. We know that. The professional staff is stunned and truly appalled that events that are alleged could have happened here. We promise you that we will continue to strive to provide the very best educational, athletic and co-curricular programs for your child, and offer them in a safe, caring and nurturing school community.

Again, we are saddened by the alleged events and can only work to make certain that this kind of thing -- the first time this sort of thing has ever been suspected to have happened at our school -- never happens again.

To view the many procedures and practices we have in place to promote a positive school climate and ensure student safety please visit our website @ <http://www.middletownschoools.org/page.cfm?p=5>

Sincerely,

Robert Fontaine, Principal

Cheryl Gonzalez, Dean of Students

Andrew O'Brien, Assistant Principal

Colleen Weiner, Assistant Principal

Michael Pitruzzello, Director Athletics, Health,
Physical Education, and Student Activities

Programs in Place Fostering a Positive School Climate

Peer Mediation - A select group of juniors and seniors are provided training in peer mediation techniques and provide a system for resolving student disputes before they escalate.

Men in School

A Mentor Program for heavily discipline involved boys meets weekly with school and community mentors.

Direct Involvement Two members from the community work in our school on a regular basis meeting with students who have been sent out of class or are disruptive.

Dragons in Action is a program through Youth Services that involves our students in decision making and service related activities coordinated through our Youth Services Bureau.

Off-site family meetings occur when long-standing disputes between families impact the high school. Meetings are held with family members at the police community room.

PRIDE is a program in which all students meet twice a month in an advisory model of 12-13 students /teacher. Students remain in the same group for four years following a behavior and academic focused curriculum and open discussion on a variety of topics.

Alternative Education - Two alternative programs provide opportunities for students who cannot be successful in the traditional setting. Hall House is a comprehensive program for disruptive students providing a smaller setting yet enabling students to gradually re-enter the more traditional setting. The Evening Program meets the needs of students who do not respond to the traditional school day or due to family responsibilities cannot attend during normal hours. Students in this program earn their elective credits through a work experience component.

Captains Breakfast – M.H.S. Athletic Director sponsors a series of Captain’s breakfasts to discuss expectations for leadership.

Partnership, PTA, and Boosters – These organizations are well supported and provide an excellent vehicle for communication between parents and the school.

Admin/Teacher/Student Meetings – The administration facilitates meetings with students experiencing disciplinary issues and their classroom teacher. This has proved effective in reducing negative behaviors.

Guidance Role – Guidance has assumed an increased role in mediating and counseling students in distress.

Teacher In-service on Gang Identification – We have sponsored two workshops providing training for our staff related to gang culture and methods of identifying gang activity.

Diversity Week – Each April student organizations sponsor a variety of activities designed to foster a greater sense of acceptance among students and staff in the building.

Leadership Conference – Sponsored by the Consortium (five area districts) approximately 25 students meet with other consortium school students to develop leadership skills and plan leadership related initiatives.

Diversity Conference – Sponsored by the Consortium approximately 80 students attend a day long workshop addressing cultural and economic diversity and acceptance.

Class Meetings – The administration meets with each of the classes to explain our expectations for behavior and to clarify rules.

Climate Focus Group is a committee of teachers that grew out of the CALI (Connecticut Accountability for Learning) climate model and is focusing on relationships and instructional strategies related to classroom behavior management.

Blue Unity is a school spirit organization that develops activities and events designed to build a positive school culture. They also provide peer recognition for students who maintain a level of academic success and remain discipline free.

Link Crew is a freshmen transition program that provides training for junior and senior mentors. The mentors provide incoming freshmen with a meaningful transition experience before the start of school in August. Additional programs continue throughout the year.

Facility Security

Morning Entrance – Morning access for students entering the building is limited to two entrances. Both areas are staffed with administration and/or security.

Secured Building – All exterior doors remain locked throughout the school day.

Limited Access – Access for students and visitors from 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. is through the front entrance. People entering through this door must buzz to gain entrance and pass through the main office. All visitors must sign in and receive visitor badges.

Security Cameras – Sixty security monitors are located in specific areas inside and outside the building. Images are recorded and stored electronically for a month.

Internal 911 – In an emergency, faculty and staff can dial a specific number that generates a response team of administrators and security.

Card Access – Faculty and staff are provided access to the building with an ID. card reader system. This system provides a record each time a staff member enters the building.

Planners – All students must be in possession of an agenda planner or room pass when in the halls during class periods.

Student Bathroom Doors – These doors are designed to remain open during the school day. The bathroom design allows for privacy yet makes monitoring more effective.

Supervision of Students

Administrative Presence – From 6:45 a.m. until the start of classes at 7:30 a.m. all four administrators are in the hallways and at student entrances. At least one administrator is present at each of the three lunch waves.

Teachers – Teachers are in their rooms and respective hallways from 7:15 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. each morning. They are also expected to be present in their doorways during passing time providing adult supervision. Additionally, teachers are asked to be present in hallways at dismissal time.

Period Monitors in Hallways – Each period teachers with two-way radios are stationed on each floor to assist in monitoring behavior.

Two-Way Radios – A bank of radios with enhanced performance provide an effective means of communication. Thirty radios are monitored by administration, security, hall monitors, school nurse, and secretarial staff.

Security officers – Three security officers are positioned in strategic locations during specific times of day. At other times they are moving about the building. Security responds to a wide variety of emergency, security, and disciplinary needs.

SRO – The school resource officer is a member of Middletown Police Department and provided assistance to students and staff in a variety of ways. These include building relationships with students, responding to emergencies, speaking in classes.