



LITTLE SILVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

124 Willow Drive, Little Silver, NJ 07739

Dr. Carolyn M. Kossack
Superintendent of Schools

Tel: 732-741-2188
Fax: 732-741-3644

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Dear Parents,

Last week, the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida were subject to a horrible school shooting, taking the lives of 17 people. This is an event that has become all too common in schools. I was an Assistant Principal in 1999 when the Columbine High School shooting occurred. That horrible event precipitated many changes in school safety protocols. Here we are 19 years later, and while the protocols have improved dramatically since the time of Columbine, we continue to experience the unfathomable- the death of children while in school.

The Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings had a profound impact on me personally. The demographic of that school and community is much like Little Silver. I sat through a training facilitated by a parent of a Sandy Hook victim. While horrible, that event in December 2012 resulted in many positive changes in our safety and security protocols here in Little Silver. That said, there is always room for improvement.

New Jersey Law requires school districts to hold a *minimum* of two of each of the following security drills annually:

- Active shooter
- Evacuation (non- fire)
- Bomb threat
- Lockdown

In addition to the aforementioned drills, examples of other types of security drills include:

- Shelter-in-place
- Reverse evacuation
- Evacuation to relocation site
- Testing of school's notification system and procedures
- Testing of school's communication system and procedures
- Tabletop exercise
- Full scale exercise

In Little Silver, we take our drills with children very seriously. In addition, on an annual basis, the Little Silver Police facilitate a Crisis Management Training with the teachers. We have gone so far as to have the police shoot blanks in the hallways to create simulations that are as close to reality as possible. While that particular simulation has not been done annually, it had a profound impact on all staff members being trained.

Our Board of Education approves monthly drills for each building on each and every agenda. Our Police Department has facilitated numerous drills over the years that have transitioned from one drill (i.e. a Lockdown) into a second drill (i.e. Evacuation). Our drills include Police Officers wearing full SWAT gear. Students are used to seeing this. At the Point Road School, drills are often followed by the police debriefing with children.

For years, we have worked with the police so that the floor plans in each building are well identified. All police officers have access to this information which includes specific numbering of rooms and exits. Every officer has been trained in active shooter response and every officer has the equipment needed to respond to an incident. Each of these horrible tragedies has provided information from which we have learned. We have used each and every incident to adapt our training protocols.



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We have an outstanding relationship and cooperation with both the Police Department and the Little Silver Borough. This year, the Little Silver Town Council graciously agreed to pay for a universal mapping project of our schools to be used by first responders and outside emergency response units. The mapping project will expedite response to specific locations and allow all first responders to have the same operational awareness that all Little Silver Police have. This project was started in the fall and is well underway.

Chief Shaffery assigned a Police Office as a liaison to all three schools (Point Road, Markham Place and RBR) to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks. This officer is the point person who facilitates our drills, and he has made many recommendations to improve school security whenever and wherever practical, and the schools have implemented them.

The LS Police Department trains with our surrounding towns to enable officers to provide backup within minutes to all of our communities. Another added layer of response is the Monmouth County Emergency Response Team. This is a team consisting of highly trained police officers from the Monmouth County Police Departments that will be immediately dispatched anytime there is an incident requiring their response.

One of the changes made to the schools in recent years is the addition of security cameras. Both schools have both internal and external cameras. We will continue to add cameras to each building.

I have received a couple of inquiries from parents regarding our safety protocols (i.e. inquiring about hiding places for staff and students, inquiring about law enforcements plans for an active shooter, etc.). I respectfully will not provide that level of specificity regarding our practices. I understand how difficult that must be to hear, but we are in agreement with the Police Department that divulging specific procedures could compromise the integrity of our protocols. Community members are welcome to visit the Police Department's website to get a snapshot of some of their training <http://littlesilverpolice.org/emergency-response-team/>. The Police training is continuous and it will evolve as the threats and tactics evolve.

There are procedures that we can collectively improve. First, the office staff in both buildings can ask for your name and purpose for your visit each and every time you come to the school. When they know you, they don't always ask. Moving forward, they have been directed to ask who you are, and you will also be asked to hold your ID in front of the camera. This will give us a visual of all visitors on our video feed.

Further, as members of the community, you can help. When you visit our facilities, you can avoid holding the door open for others. While it is always done with the best of intentions, we need to know each individual entering the building. Also, while it may sound cliché, **if you see or hear something, say something**. Sadly, in the case of many school shootings, the shooter had a tie to the school in some way. We all have a part in ensuring the safety of our children.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Sincerely,

Carolyn M. Kossack
Superintendent of Schools