



# Bethel Public Schools

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Dear Community Members,

The tragedy in Newtown has shocked and horrified us all. Along with grieving for our friends, neighbors and colleagues and looking for ways to support the families in Newtown, many have asked about the safety and security protocols in place in our own schools. Below is an update that follows the information I shared in previous emails and newsletters.

As part of our effort to preserve the integrity of our safety and security procedures, we do not publish to the public detailed information about them. Please be advised that our schools have had crisis plans in place for many years. These were developed in coordination with our local police and emergency response experts. The comprehensive plans detail procedures for an array of responses in the event of an emergency. Some sample elements include evacuation and lockdown drills which all students and staff practice routinely, emergency preparedness of our school-based crisis teams, communication protocols with local authorities and the community, and individual staff assignments for specific crisis management responsibilities. These plans are reviewed regularly during the year and updates and changes are made as appropriate.

Additionally, all five of our schools now have security systems at the main entries which include buzzer controlled, locked doors and camera and intercom systems. Visitors are required to show credentials, sign in and wear a badge. Staff members also wear identification badges. All exterior doors remain locked during the school day and access is restricted to the main entrances at each building.

One full-time Bethel police officer (School Resource Officer) is assigned to Bethel High School. Another, the Youth Officer has significantly increased her time spent in the lower schools and an additional full-time officer has been assigned to patrol the school complex all day. For the time being, patrol officers

*“Our Primary Purpose is to Improve Student Achievement.”*

are assigned to each of the four lower schools to monitor arrival and maintain a strong presence at dismissal.

Two weeks ago we contacted the security firm with whom we work to conduct an audit of our safety and security hardware. We have reviewed the recommendations and plans are in place to make appropriate additions and modifications. Some of these recommendations include alarming all exterior doors, placement of additional security cameras, and installation of emergency alert buttons to name a few.

At its last regular meeting (12/20/12), the Bethel Board of Education convened a sub-committee on school safety and security. The purpose of the committee is to work with the administration to ensure that all of our safety and security mechanisms reflect best, most current professional practice.

The safety and security of our children is foremost among our responsibilities. We continue to meet with local law enforcement and crisis response experts to ensure that our practices reflect current professional thinking and are committed to making the most appropriate changes that will further our safety and security interests. A team from Bethel Public Schools will be attending a school security symposium organized by the State Department of Education on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013. There will be a number of nationally recognized experts on the topic and we hope to come home with updated information to include in our security plans and protocols.

The event in Newtown is unimaginable. While there are many lessons to learn, one certainly is that there is no dollar value to be placed on human life. Our children are our most precious assets and we are doing everything in our power to ensure that our schools are safe places for learning. Our staff's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of our children. They remain ever vigilant. As more information comes to light and we learn new and better ways to manage the safety and security of our children we will adapt accordingly.



Kevin J. Smith, Ph.D  
Superintendent of Schools



Matthew Knickerbocker  
First Selectman