

NORTH BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
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Scott Schoonmaker
Superintendent of Schools

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October 23, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians,

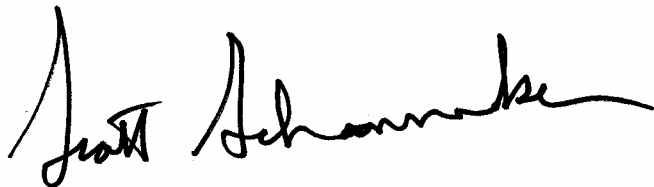
As you know, in the past week, there have been many reports in the media about school safety concerns at North Branford High School. Newspaper articles and television coverage have referred to threats of violence against our students and staff members at North Branford High School. The purpose of this letter is to inform you as parents that the administration treats these threats seriously, and has taken appropriate measures to protect students and to prevent harm and disruption to our educational environment. The school administration took immediate steps when it learned of a potential threat to assure itself that the school environment was secure and that no weapons were present in the school environment. Moreover, if a dangerous situation has been discovered, our staff and students have been trained to follow our emergency response plans for lockdown or evacuation. Fortunately, no such lockdown or evacuation was required in this situation.

In situations of this nature, the administration works collaboratively with the police to investigate and take appropriate safety precautions, particularly when there are allegations of threatening behavior and/or reports of weapons. We are proud of our excellent working relationship with the North Branford police, and believe that the close cooperation of police and school administration promotes school safety and security at North Branford High School, as well as on our other campuses.

Through grant funding, the North Branford Public Schools will be able to enhance school security in several ways in the immediate future. For example, during the 2009-2010 school year, additional surveillance cameras have been installed at North Branford High School, Stanley T. Williams School, Jerome Harrison School, Totoket Valley Elementary School and will be installed at North Branford Intermediate School upon completion of the building project. The same grant funds will be used to install upgraded doors, hardware and access controls at all of the district's schools, enabling school staff to verify the identity of individuals entering the school buildings. The district is also finalizing its plans to issue ID cards to all school staff members, further promoting the safety and security of our educational environment. The Board has asked for North Branford police to be present at the beginning and end of the school day at North Branford High School, to enhance the district's own measures to promote an orderly entry and dismissal procedure. To protect students and the public from dangers posed by individuals operating their vehicles at high speeds in the high school parking lot, the district is also considering the installation of "traffic calming" devices such as speed bumps in the high school parking lot.

Student safety is our first priority in the North Branford Public Schools. The measures described in this letter will provide for greater security and safety in our buildings and on our grounds. However, these measures cannot and will not replace our efforts as educators to instruct children about their personal safety, appropriate interactions with others, and the need to ask adults for help in situations where children feel intimidated, threatened, harassed or fearful. We encourage you as parents to discuss these recent events with your children. The best means for assuring the safety of our school community is a strong partnership between parents, students and educators. To that end, please reinforce for your children that they should immediately report any concerns regarding school or personal safety to school administrators, guidance counselors and/or other appropriate school staff members. Parents may also call at any time. In particular, please stress to your children that threats of violence should not be the subject of joking or teasing, and that students should report all references to or concerns about potential violence to an adult. We must reinforce for our children that, even if they think a threat is not serious, or is intended as a joke, assessments of threatening behavior should be made by adults. Thank you for working with us to educate and protect our students when concerns like this arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Schoonmaker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Scott Schoonmaker
Superintendent of Schools

c: Board of Education
Administrators