

Safer Schools For a Better Tomorrow *Initiative*

The goal is to increase district-level preparedness to improve continuity of learning for PreK-12 schools and minimize impact of school-related disruptions and emergencies.

PHONE:
(609) 631-4531

FAX:
(609) 631-4926

E-MAIL:
ssbt@doe.state.nj.us

We're on the Web!
See us at:

www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/task

Individual Highlights:

NJ In the News	1
Hot Topics	1
Promising Practices	2
Special Message	3
Significant Incidents	4
Did You Know?	4
Prepárate Ahora	5
District Spotlight	5
Next Issue	6

School Preparedness Now is a newsletter that provides New Jersey school districts with relevant, up-to-date, and practical information on safety & preparedness for schools and local communities.

For more information contact the **Governor's School Security Task Force** at ssbt@doe.state.nj.us.

NJ In the News: **Unannounced Drill Visits**

Post the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, New Jersey made several headlines regarding school safety. Of particular interest were media sound bites weighing in on State Coordinator, Anthony Bland's announcement of surprise security drills coming to N.J. schools ([NJ.com, 1/16/13 by J. Rundquist/The Star Ledger](#)). Despite some media flurry highlighting this move as a "gotcha"

strategy toward schools, Commissioner Cerf reminds us in a comment to John Mooney of [NJ Spotlight](#) on 1/17/13, "New Jersey has long been a leader in preventative measures and preparation, and I think continuing down that path finds the right balance between safety and a supportive learning environment for kids". To the point, N.J. created the [Governor's School Security Task Force](#) to

prioritize school safety across multiple agencies in 2006. The Task Force also enacted the School Security [Drill Law in 2010](#) and has since made strides to ensure schools are practicing effectively and prepared to respond during emergencies. "Protecting our children is a responsibility we do not take lightly," affirms Ed Dickson, Director of N.J. Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness, **..cont'd p.2**

Hot Topics: **To Lock or Not to Lock?**

Most of us expect our children's schools to be open environments where parents can come in and out without pause much less having to be buzzed in, sign-in and show ID just to drop-off their child's forgotten lunch. Even more so, most of our schools were designed and built with the premise that schools were safe places – large windows to expose sunlight, open space to promote collaboration, void of locking mechanisms to encourage a sense of

welcome are all too common in our schools.

However, as safety is a growing concern for educators and parents, how we mitigate against crises given our existing facilities, resources, and limitations is important to assess.

Recently, school administrators asked the State questions regarding locking doors during the school day. We turned to our partners at the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Fire

Safety to help us answer this question. This is what they had to say in **DCA Bulletin 2013-1:**

► **Classroom doors can be locked to prevent entry from the outside** *if* the door can be opened from the inside without a key or special knowledge.

► A hasp lock, slide bolt or door wedge is **absolutely prohibited.**

► **Magnetic strips are permitted** as long as egress can be made.

..cont'd p.2

“Security is always seen as too much until the day it is not enough”

*-William Hedgcock Webster
Homeland Security*

“To use a coaching analogy, we believe that you play as you practice. Impromptu drills are a means to get us prepared for the real thing (which of course, we all hope will never happen).”

-Robert Sanchez

Assistant Superintendent,

West New York School District



NJ In the News (...cont'd)

in the [first edition of School Preparedness Now](#). School administrators are also ahead of the curve implementing promising practices in their local communities. In fact, many districts around the state were already practicing “surprise drills” prior to [Commissioner Cerf’s February 26 Broadcast memo on Unannounced visits](#).

Districts such as West New York, New Brunswick, and Pennsauken value the authenticity of the drill. It is a way to vet plans in a genuine way and to assess the unexpected in a less than ideal setting. John Kummings, principal at Glenwood Avenue Elementary shares, “School Security is an area in which it is important for us to venture

outside of our comfort zone and open ourselves to constructive feedback”.

Unannounced visits are an opportunity to share lessons learned to support a collaborative effort. Visits will be assessed using a multi-point spot checklist.

For more information on these visits call the OSPEP Team at (609) 631-4531.

Hot Topics (...cont'd)

► **Permits are required** in any case whereby the actual door hardware is being altered or changed.

School administrators and fire officials are encouraged to work jointly to ensure safety and compliance are met.

Questions? Contact the Bureau of Fire Code Enforcement at (609) 633-6132 or visit www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dfs.

Promising Practices: Plain Language

Why Plain English?

EMT = Emergency Medical Treatment
 EMT = Emergency Medical Technician
 EMT = Emergency Management Team
 EMT = Eastern Mediterranean Time (GMT+0200)
 EMT = Effective Methods Team
 EMT = Effects Management Tool
 EMT = El Monte, CA (airport code)
 EMT = Electron Microscope Tomography
 EMT = Email Money Transfer

During emergencies it is critical everyone understands the danger present and the instructions given to respond.

What is it? Plain Language is defined as: **“communication that can be understood by the intended audience and meets the purpose of the communicator.”**

Plain language avoids confusion, misunderstanding, and minimizes the time needed to “decode” particularly for persons that are not a part of the

school’s day-to-day, such as parents, other visitors and vendors, and even emergency responders.

While it is not a state mandate to use plain language to start an emergency response or to begin a drill, the Department of Education in concert with NJ Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness and NJ State Police Office of Emergency Management highly recommend the use of plain language. Rita Mendez, principal at an Early Childhood Center in West New York uses plain

language during unannounced drills. Principal Mendez comments “children have been very receptive and know exactly what to do even at this young age.” She adds, “We are laying the foundation for the future.”

[Plain language is a matter of safety declares the National Incident Management System.](#)

Plain language simplifies the communication process and reduces the chance of error during an emergency situation.

JOSEPH T. HACKETT, MEMBER
161ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

HARRISBURG OFFICE:
406 IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING
PO BOX 202161
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2161
PHONE: (717) 260-6168
FAX: (717) 787-8215

jhackett@pahousegop.com
www.rephackett.com



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg
March 11, 2013

DISTRICT OFFICES:
554 E. MAGDADE BLVD.
FOLSOM, PA 19033
PHONE: (610) 461-8543
FAX: (610) 461-6976

BOROUGH OF BROOKHAVEN
2 CAMBRIDGE ROAD
BROOKHAVEN, PA 19015

Commissioner Chris Cerf
New Jersey Department of Education
100 River View Plaza
PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

Re: Gibbsboro School Security Drill

Dear Commissioner Cerf:

Recently, my colleague Representative Mike Regan and I had the distinct pleasure of witnessing a Tier III Lockdown Security Drill at Gibbsboro School first-hand and I wanted to take a brief moment to let you know how impressed I was with the event.

In the wake of the tragedy at Sandy Hook, several of us in the Pennsylvania General Assembly began looking very closely at the security of our public schools. I will soon be introducing legislation that would mandate regularly held school security drills. After doing research, I found that New Jersey was easily the most comprehensive and robust state law dealing with school security drills, so I wanted to see the law in action.

Fortunately, my staff was able to coordinate a meeting earlier this week at Gibbsboro with Superintendent Anthony Trongone, Principal Brett Thorp and Barbara Pugh and Anthony Bland from your Department. The presentation they gave us on the background of the New Jersey law and its application was second to none. It is very clear that your state has a strong grasp of how to effectively mesh school security with functionality.

As Commissioner for the State Department of Education, you should be very proud of what we witnessed at Gibbsboro School. Superintendent Trongone and Principal Thorp have done a phenomenal job training their faculty and students and it is clear that the monthly drills have created a very safe environment for everyone at the school. Gibbsboro School is a shining example of what mandated security drills can do for the well-being of students and staff. I hope that we in Pennsylvania are able to follow in your footsteps and bring that level of professionalism and security to our schools here.

Sincerely,

Joseph T. Hackett

cc: Honorable Mike Regan, 92nd Legislative District, Pennsylvania House of Representatives



Pictured L-R:

Joe Hackett (PA),
Brett Thorp (Principal),
Barbara Pugh (NJDOE)
Mike Regan (PA), Tony
Trongone
(Superintendent),
Anthony Bland (NJDOE),
Justin Tomaszewski
(Local Police).

Significant Incidents that Make an Impact on NJ School Policies

October 22-29, 2012

Hurricane Sandy

Noted as the deadliest and most destructive hurricane in U.S. history. The storm greatly affected NJ schools revealing a continued need to assess identified schools serving as shelters and districts' COOP Plans.



December 14, 2012
Sandy Hook Elementary

Lone gunman fatally shot 20 children & 6 adults, before committing suicide. The incident pushed everyone to reassess schools as soft targets and to plan effectively. The tragedy burst the "it can never happen here" bubble.

AT-A-GLANCE: **School Preparedness** – A Holistic Approach

A school's primary mission is to educate children. However, schools cannot achieve their primary mission if students are fearful, unhealthy, and not ready to learn due to other factors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a *Coordinated School Health Model* to foster and promote academic success for students. This model is a strategy for improving student's health and learning in our schools. The model is made up of several unique and complementary components which contribute to student's readiness for learning. A comprehensive, coordinated approach to academic success is critical to advancing our children.

[Retrieved 4/3/13 from <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/>].

Did You Know? **NJ Facts**

52 - The number of days between Hurricane Sandy and the Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting.

"There's no harm in hoping for the best as long as you are prepared for the worst" – Stephen King.

3rd – The week in October all New Jersey school district safety plans are to be updated in compliance with N.J.A.C 6A:16-5.1. **This week is also School Violence Awareness.**

48 – The number of hours district administrators are mandated to give notification to law enforcement regarding security drills in schools. **Invite your local police to observe your drills and give feedback.**

1 – The number of school administrator kit each school building in New Jersey must have to aid during emergency responses.

30.1 – The average number of minutes it takes for commuters to get to work.



Academic success cannot be achieved if students do not have a safe learning environment. Research has proven students who are fearful do not learn well.

For this reason, New Jersey is one of the most aggressive states when it comes to protecting our nation's most vulnerable population – **OUR CHILDREN**. New Jersey is serious about providing a top-notch education for all children, all communities *regardless of zip code*.

Prepárate Ahora: ¿Como Se Dice?

During summer 2011, NJ DOE hosted an 8 week course for state stakeholders on **Spanish as a Second Language** as part of the Planning for the Next Pandemic grant received to look at ways continuity of education could occur during emergencies. New Jersey recognizes the importance of linguistic and cultural competence in planning and implementing resources, as well as communicating and delivering messages across various mediums. In response to this growing need to better communicate across diverse populations, NJ is targeting key stakeholders that are integral during emergency planning, including state officials, law enforcement, administrators, and education personnel to enhance our state's linguistic competency. In this spirit, this newsletter will feature a Spanish Language Vocabulary Section.

Aviso

--Announcement

Evacuación

--Evacuation

Principal

--Principal

Taladro de Confinamiento

--Lockdown Drill

Códigos

--Codes

Plan de Emergencia

--Emergency Plan

Silencio

--Quiet

Taladro de Seguridad

--Security Drill

Districto

--District

Policía

--Police

Superintendente

--Superintendent

Todo Claro

--All Clear

Your District in the Spotlight: Gibbsboro School District

New Jersey schools are taking drilling seriously. And other states such as our neighbor, Pennsylvania, are interested in [How NJ is Keeping Our Kids Safe](#). CBS News 3 along with our [NJ DOE OSPEP Team](#) and Pennsylvania State Representatives, Joseph T. Hackett and Mike Regan, visited [Gibbsboro School District](#) to see how this district has drilling down to a science.

Regional Planner, Barbara Pugh, has been working with Gibbsboro school district for nearly two years. The district has shared numerous promising practices that were recently highlighted during a [Making Our School Safe](#) symposium with other participating districts. Turning lessons learned into shareable practices is one way New Jersey is setting benchmark standards for all school districts to prepare and respond in the event of an emergency.

Click on the hyperlinked text or visit the following link to read about Gibbsboro promising practices in drilling:

<http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/video/8629069-i-team-school-security/>

GO Spartans!

We applaud Gibbsboro School District on a job well done and for making school safety and preparedness a priority!



NEXT ISSUE

Highlights



- ✓ **County-Based School Safety Mini Conferences**
- ✓ **Non-Public Schools Symposiums**
- ✓ **Next Steps of *Safer Schools for a Better Tomorrow***



Sergeant Dunham of the Office of Emergency Management presenting at a New Jersey Department of Education Refresher Training for non-public schools on School Safety & Preparedness in Bergen County (4/9/13).

Want to be featured in our next issue? Have a topic you want us to address?

Send us comments, promising practices, featured school districts, or an incident you have dealt with to:

ssbt@doe.state.nj.us

About ... The Governor's School Security Task Force

Established in 2006, the mission of the School Security Task Force is to further enhance the safety and security of New Jersey's public and nonpublic school students and, to the extent possible, develop standard benchmarks for education and law enforcement officials to help maintain consistency in school security protocols across a wide variety of safety and security challenges.

