



## SOUTHWICK-TOLLAND-GRANVILLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you may recall, on Tuesday December 6, 2016 you received notification that the schools on the Southwick Campus had been placed in a "shelter in place". This was a result of the Southwick Police Department notifying us that a bank robbery had taken place in the vicinity of the Southwick campus. For a short time, two schools were initially placed in a lockdown but quickly transitioned to a shelter in place. The shelter in place was a precautionary procedure meant to protect students until the police were sure the bank robber posed no threat to the schools. Since last Tuesday, we've had some questions about "What is shelter in place?"

Shelter in place means to seek safety within the building you already occupy, rather than to evacuate or seek a community emergency shelter. The shelter in place on December 6, 2016 lasted approximately 30 minutes. During the shelter in place, students remained safely in their classrooms with their teachers. The doors were closed and locked and learning continued. No one was allowed to enter or exit the building. When the Southwick Police Department determined that it was appropriate, they contacted the District and the shelter in place was lifted. At no time were any of the students in danger. Another example of when shelter in place might be used is for a medical emergency in the building. Shelter in place ensures that hallways are clear for emergency personnel to move freely throughout a building.

In November, you received notification that all four schools in the District would submit to lockdown drills. Similar to shelter in place, lockdown is a heightened state of awareness for both students and teachers and would be used in the event of a direct threat within the school or on the campus. On November 18, 2016, the State and Local Police and the Southwick Fire Department partnered with the District to conduct lockdown drills at all four schools. The police were extremely impressed during our first lockdown drill on November 18, 2016, and said to keep practicing because we'll get better each time.

In talking with your students at home you will find that, beginning with this school year, schools have conducted other lockdown and shelter in place drills. This type of emergency drill is not new in the world of education, but is still new to many of our teachers and students and we are still learning. The first Enhanced Lockdown training took place with District staff in late September and additional trainings are planned. As educators we know, as with anything new, there are lots of learning opportunities that take place with each drill and each event. Each time we are getting better, making improvements and analyzing our lessons learned. Throughout all of it, please know that we are closely partnered with emergency personnel and the safety of students is our number one priority.

In the unlikely event of an emergency at your child's school we strongly request that you not respond to the school unless instructed to do so. Well intentioned community members responding directly to the school during an emergency have significantly hampered the efforts of emergency personnel in other jurisdictions. Should there ever be an emergency incident at your child's school we will advise you of the exact location of the reunification site via local media as well as through automated calls. Those automated calls will go to the most up-to-date contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses we have for you. As such, it is imperative that you keep your contact information up-to-date with us so that we have the best means by which to reach you.

If you have any questions. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's school.

Sincerely,

Jennifer C. Willard, Superintendent