



LINDENWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING • 801 EGG HARBOR ROAD • LINDENWOLD, NJ 08021

KRISTIN P. O'NEIL, ED.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Lindenwold Lion Family,

In today's society, we are reminded more than we would like of the critical need for districts to adhere to security measures to protect our students and staff. I am sure, like me, you have had some sleepless nights thinking about unsettling events across our country or you have sat in disbelief thinking about the conversation(s) you have had or will have to have with your child(ren). Today's reality requires schools to share how we prepare for a host of emergency events.

DISTRICT PREPARATION & PROCEDURES:

- During the 2022 – 2023 school year, New Jersey's Homeland Security Office visited four of our schools and monitored the manner in which we practiced safety drills. Following this experience, representatives from the Homeland Security Office provided us with feedback.
- In the Spring of 2024, the District hosted a *Community Safety & Security Presentation* by a school security expert. He reviewed best practices and security options available to the Lindenwold Board of Education. He outlined practical considerations regarding school safety measures, too.
- Each school has an official emergency plan and as a District, we regularly collaborate with our local police department.
- Since 2021, the District has added safety vestibules to all school buildings. There is a secure place for guests to drop off student belongings without entering the buildings. There is a vestibule area for guest information to be collected prior to entering the school.
- All but one building has a security "transaction" window inside the vestibule area for guests to conduct business without needing to access the full interior of the building. The final transaction window will be installed over the 24-25 school year.
- The District employs two School Resource Officers and one Class III Officer during the school year to assist with security plan management as well as on-site safety and security concerns. These officers are on-site for no less than 180 student school days. It is a daily, routine occurrence to see our students engaging with our local law enforcement in a positive manner, and this should not signal a problem or concern. As a community, we want our students to build positive relationships with law enforcement, and we want our officers to build positive relationships with our students, too.
- Every month all schools practice a minimum of two unannounced safety/emergency drills. These drills include: fire drills, lockdown drills, evacuation drills, weather drills, shelter-in-place drill, etc. When discussing these drills with students, the schools will use terms such as: "Hold," "Secure," "Shelter," "Evacuate," and "Lockdown."
- The District maintains an on-site internal and/or external camera system. In the event of a true emergency, our local police department would be granted access to our camera system
- Staff throughout each building are CPR and Restraint Trained.

- Ms. McManis serves as the School District Safety Specialist and is provided with ongoing training in order to maintain her School Safety Specialist Certification.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES:

- There are brand new *Mimio Boards* in every classroom throughout the district which were purchased and installed over the Spring (2024). These boards have the capacity to communicate building wide messages in an emergency situation. (You may have read about this capacity in articles about the Apalachee High School in Georgia.)
- Additional security cameras are added every year to ensure our cameras are up-to-date, continue to address any visibility issues, and to ensure our camera system is effectively maintained.

DISTRICT DAY TO DAY PROCEDURES:

- The daily procedures the District has put into place preventatively addresses a variety of safety and security measures. We go beyond “worst case scenario” safety concerns.
 - Staff, students, and guests must wear School IDs at all times. (Elementary student IDs are secured to bookbags.)
 - No student may open any outside door for any guest – including school staff.
 - All staff and students are expected to enter / exit the building using the approved doors.
 - Students may not have food items delivered during the school day via food delivery services. (Only those individuals authorized by administration may enter our school buildings.)
 - Hoods and hats may not be worn during the school day.
 - Hoods / hats make it very difficult to see the faces of individuals who belong in our school building. They also make it very difficult to distinguish individuals on video cameras. When individuals wear hoods/hats, it creates a way for someone who doesn’t belong in the school to “blend in.”
 - Cell phones and electronic devices are not permitted to be used at all in grades PK – 8. Students may not record or photograph someone during the school day, and students may not share videos/photos of another students.
 - Students have created safety hazards by blocking staff in hallways while attempting to photograph or video tape another student. This endangers a child’s physical, social, and emotional safety.
 - At this time, we are working with older students (Gr. 9 – 12) to teach phone etiquette. If this strategy is unsuccessful, the district will transition to a more restrictive process to protect our students’ interests.
 - Bullying is enhanced by technology usage during the school day.

COMMUNICATION:

- Following every school emergency drill, your child’s school will communicate with families via Real Time, the school’s notification system. All families should make sure their most up-to-date contact information is recorded in our information system (email, cell phone number for text messages, and phone number).
- Please refrain from communicating school related emergency information on social media. Please understand the school district must first make sure our students and staff are safe. After ensuring everyone’s safety, we will then communicate with our families. Please trust, in the event of a true emergency or real safety/security concern, the school will accurately communicate with the community as soon as we are able. In a real emergency situation, it is essential that all communication IS complete and accurate.
- Teachers will NOT be permitted to share information of any kind during an emergency. Therefore,

teachers and staff will not be permitted to send out emails, texts, or social media posts (including Dojo updates). If you contact a teacher during an emergency, that staff member will not be permitted to respond back to you until the emergency has ended. Staff will be happy to respond once the situation has resolved, and they are given permission to do so.

- Students will be instructed NOT to communicate from their cell phones during a real emergency. This is how rumors and false information circulate through communities and social media. It causes unnecessary and enhanced panic. However, if you receive a message from a student during an emergency drill / situation, please avoid the temptation to share that information on social media. Please understand spreading false or partial information during an emergency does more harm than good. Often the school and law enforcement agencies are working from different sources of information than what has been posted on social media. Please resist the temptation to assume social media information – not published by the school district or law enforcement agency - is 100% accurate.
- In a real emergency or safety / security situation, the district would be working in conjunction with multiple agencies: law enforcement and first responders. It is important to keep in mind all of the agencies would be coordinating services/resources. This form of communication does take longer to organize. At the same time, district staff must prioritize communicating with the families of those students / staff directly involved before communicating with the community at large. We ask for your patience and understanding in the event this is necessary.
- Please keep in mind, if you choose to call the school to obtain information, there will be many other families doing the same. You may not be able to reach someone in the office right away because the staff may be fielding an abundance of family phone calls. Some of our offices only have one or two individuals available to answer the phones. Please be patient with us as your call is important to us, too.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE:

Shelter-in-place drills may be used more often than other drills in the course of a school year. This particular drill allows the school district to lockdown the exterior of the building while allowing students to remain in their classrooms and continue with their learning. Some schools may refer to these drills as “Hold” or “Secure” drills.

These drills are used for a variety of reasons - most of which allow the school to provide privacy and/or space for staff to address a situation in common areas such as the hallway.

Examples:

- A student or staff member may be experiencing a medical situation, and we need our staff to be able to assist the individual. (i.e. a fall, a seizure, nausea, fainting spell, etc.)
- A student may be having a difficult day and may need some space to re-group and/or work with our Child Study Team.
- An angry visitor may be causing a disturbance in the main office area.
- There could be an emergency in our community or surrounding community where we feel it is best to keep our students inside the building.

ACTIVE SHOOTERS & EVACUATIONS:

- The school will communicate with all parents through the Real Time Communication System / Parent Portal (telephone, email, and text). We will also communicate via our social media pages. It is very important to make sure your contact information is always maintained, up-to-date, and you have identified how you prefer to be notified.

- In the event of a real emergency, please refrain from the immense temptation to rush to the school as your actual presence and your vehicle itself may block emergency vehicles from reaching the building. As a parent, the urge to get your hands around your child will be overwhelming; however, there have been situations where emergency vehicles have been blocked by families wanting to “get to their child.” This creates another serious safety hazard to the students and staff inside the building.
- If there is a need to evacuate students and staff to an off-site location, the District will notify you where you may meet your child. Upon arrival, parents will be directed to a “check-in area.” You will then be escorted to a “waiting area.”
- In the event we need to implement our reunification plan, please realize this will take time – a significant amount of time. We could have several hundred students who need to be reunited with their families. It is important to note this will be a stressful situation for our staff, too. A significant level of patience and understanding will be required if this plan is to be enacted. Be mentally prepared to wait in the designated “waiting area” in the event this was to occur.
- As parents arrive and check-in to the reunification site, school staff will require you to present identification. There will be no greater frustration than being worried about your loved one and being turned away because you forgot your identification.
- Students will **only** be released to individuals named as emergency contacts in Real Time. **Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone not listed in Real Time as an emergency contact.**
- We apologize in advance, as this most certainly would be a highly charged and emotional situation, but students will not be released to family, friends, neighbors, etc. if individuals are not listed as Emergency Contacts. Families should ensure their Parent Portal is up-to-date with their preferred Emergency Contact Lists.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS:

- Every school building has a Crisis Response Team. In the event we have advance notice of an emergency or crisis situation, the team would meet in advance to organize.
- In the event the crisis is immediate, the team would meet after a crisis to debrief, revise, and re-organize.

Please know the District understands and respects the knowledge that families have real and valid concerns. In today’s “information age,” we also understand the desire to have as much information as possible and as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the school is not able to communicate everything our families wish we could. The District also values providing accurate and complete information to our families, and there are situations where that may require a little more time than our families would prefer. Please trust that the District will share this information when we are able.

Finally, we are ONLY permitted to share information about your own child with you. We may not discuss details about any child who is not your own. It is important that you trust in the knowledge that our District cares about you, your child, and your family. We will do everything within our control to ensure our staff and your child is safe and secure.

Sincerely,
 Dr. Kristin P. O’Neil
 Lindenwold District Superintendent