

The Trailblazer Tribune

News and Announcements about Leicester Central School

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From the Superintendent of Schools

I write this article with a heavy heart as schools and parents are reeling once again from a school shooting in Florida and a threat of one right here in our region. Although I had sent a letter to parents in the days before school break, I want to extend that information here and answer a few questions that have come my way.

In R.N.E.S.U., we have been practicing school safety responses to incidents for nearly two decades. Columbine changed our world, and we now need to worry about intruders who intend to do harm. Where we used to do fire drills and fire evacuations, we now include in our drills responses to intruders in our schools. We use the A.L.I.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) response system, as does most of the state of Vermont and have practiced with our local first responders, as well. All of our schools have safety teams and safety protocols in place that are based upon the latest research, and we provide age-appropriate instruction to students.

From a parent perspective, concerning aspects of a major incident within a school include communication and reunification. We do have a communication plan in place, with a robo call system that can also send emails in an emergency. In a major emergency, it is important to note that our first priority is to ensure the safety of all students and staff. It may well be that we are not able to communicate for a bit. We will be working with law enforcement to first secure the building and will be limited to what information we will be able to provide immediately. Often, you will receive texts or tweets from your children before you hear from the school. Also, often those texts and tweets are inaccurate, other than to notify you something is going on. We recognize that, but may have limited ability to act faster than we do. Once we are able to get a communication out by phone or email, we will then institute a communication system with periodic updates. Calling the school or district office is not a very good solution, as we will all be busy with roles and responses to the incident itself and may not be able to talk with you. However, communication is one of the first systems we will set up as soon as we are able.

Reunification will be communicated through our communication channels. We will let you know where to go to be reunited with your child, and we will set up systems for this to happen. Coming to the school is not a recommended course of action, and in fact will hamper efforts of law enforcement who will be responsible for safely securing our campus. In a major incident, the school may not be accessible and

that can be frustrating to parents. We will get the word out as soon as it is possible as to where you can pick up your child.

The most important lesson in all of this is to Say Something if you See Something. It is crucially important that we all work together to keep our students safe. If you or your child hear something or notice some unusual behavior, please contact the school or the police. The Vermont incident was thwarted thanks to two people who were willing to step forward with something they noticed or read. We have a 24-hour contact system, "Let's Talk," that can be used even when the school is closed. The police will also take your calls and will work with us to prevent any incident.

One final note: we are reviewing our practices after any incident, small or large, that occurs in our district or in the country. We are currently revisiting the entrance to Otter Valley and hope to make some changes imminently.

Please stay in touch and send your questions, comments, and concerns as they come up. Together, we will work to keep all of our students and staff safe, as they should be in school.

Jeanne Collins

Superintendent of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union

The Co-Principals' Corner

Greetings!

I hope all is well with your family and that you had a safe and enjoyable school vacation.

You have just read Superintendent Collins' report of safety practices and protocols taking place at the district level. I would now like to add a few words about what we're doing at the building level to make Leicester Central School a safe and supportive place for all who come on our property and enter through our doors.

We have a School Safety Team which meets weekly to review and revise as necessary components of our emergency management system which stems from that of the district and its related policies. We discuss individual and collective safety concerns which need attention and responses. We plan and implement three types of drills: on-site evacuation drills (gathering outside the building); off-site evacuation drills (relocating to another destination); and lock-down drills (securing ourselves safely inside the building). To respond to a changing culture, we keep close watch over students struggling with academic and behavioral issues and communicate and meet regularly to implement plans to help all students feel safe and supported. We will continue to include in upcoming newsletters more information about our school's safety measures and also share with you information we receive from other sources which may be helpful to you and your family.

Student Conferences

Can you believe it? It's time for our second round of student conferences. We are sending home sign-up information about that today, and Mrs. Randall will also soon be writing an email to parents/guardians. Conferences are scheduled for March 15th and 20th, and we are expecting everyone to participate as we enter the last few months of this school year.

P.T.O. Update

The P.T.O. is conducting a bottle drive to raise funds for school activities. This drive is taking place with the cooperation of Middlebury Discount Beverage. If you take your bottles there, you will receive a slip verifying the amount of money owed you. If you bring that slip to school, your donation will be gratefully received and used for upcoming school activities. The P.T.O. is a good forum in which to ask questions and voice concerns. Your input is valued and appreciated as we work together to educate the children of Leicester. **The next meeting of the P.T.O. takes place on Thursday, March 8th at 5:30 p.m. at the school. Please join us!**

Plastic Grocery Bags

A parent is working on a craft project and is in need of plastic grocery bags. If you have extra bags kicking around the house and don't mind parting with them, please leave them in the designated box in the main office.

Sugary/Caffeinated Drinks and Cell Phones

A few students have brought sugary or caffeinated drinks to consume at school. Because of the effect these drinks have on students' behavior, we do not allow them to be consumed at school. (Please refer to page 11 of the handbook for more information.) This is also a reminder that we also do not allow students to use cell phones during the school day. (Please see page 17 of the handbook for more information about that.) When we first see a cell phone, we ask the student to put it away. When we see it the second time, we confiscate it for the day and return it to the student at dismissal. On the third occasion, we confiscate it and ask a parent/guardian to come to school to claim it.

Thank You Notes

- ... to Ms. Betsy Moyer and Mrs. Julie Delphia, Town Clerk, for helping us with a recent project for students in grades 3-6 about local government and the election process, and
- ... to the Hannaford's Supermarket in Middlebury for their generous support of L.C.S. families during the holiday break, and
- ... to the Salisbury Congregational Church for their generous support of several L.C.S. families during our recent winter break, and
- ... to Abygayle Lanpher, Ian Miner, Deanna Ouellette, and Audrey Utter for helping at this week's Community Circle.

School Calendar

Tuesday, March 6th: Town Meeting Day (School **will** be in session.)
Thursday, March 8th (5:30-6:30 p.m.): P.T.O. Meeting
Friday, March 9th: End of 2nd Trimester
Thursday, March 15th (3:00 – 7:00 p.m.): Student Conferences
Friday, March 16th: School Day for Students to Make Up for Previous Closures
Tuesday, March 20th (3:00 – 7:00 p.m.): Student Conferences
Monday, April 16th – Friday, April 20th: Spring Recess
Friday, April 27th: Progress Reports Sent Home with Students
Monday, May 28th: Memorial Day Holiday
Friday, June 1st (6:30-8:30 p.m.): Middle School Transition Night
Tuesday, June 12th: Last School Day for the 2017-18 Academic Year