



# SOUTH SENECA

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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Dear South Seneca Community:

With another tragic school shooting this month, the national conversation has focused once again on how we keep our students safe, and rightly so. At South Seneca, we join all other public schools in New York State in monitoring and adjusting our plans for school safety on an ongoing basis.

Each school in the state is required to write and implement safety plans for every building in the district, and to share these plans with state and local police and first responders. We involve those agencies in our regular drills, and we train both students and staff how to react in a range of incidents, from those that would cause us to lock down, keeping everyone in rooms and away from doors and windows, to lockouts, keeping anyone from entering the building while school is going on, to evacuations, ushering everyone out of the building to a different location. First responders have detailed building plans to help them in their work, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we even use security software to provide them with a higher level of preparation and real-time information during emergencies.

Beyond these required measures, it has become routine practice now to meet as a building safety team to brainstorm potential situations, offer suggestions for better actions, and debrief new information we get from doing the drills. We discover the places we can improve, and we put new procedures in place to address the gaps.

From an investment standpoint, at South Seneca we've transitioned over the last decade to new systems of door and window security, keeping outside doors locked during school hours and requiring visitors to enter into single access points with buzz-in entry, and security cameras positioned throughout the buildings and grounds. We have regular conversations about what we can do to make the system more secure, and if we learn of new strategies, or new products, that are proven effective, we talk about phasing them into our own plans.

When it comes to program and mission, we put a high priority on the educational side of our operations, and it is almost counterintuitive that education wouldn't be the highest priority of all. But even education takes a secondary role to safety; the reminder to everyone, all the time, is "safety first." Sadly, we must prepare for the worst possible scenarios, and it doesn't help us to pretend they could never happen. Instead, we do everything we can to prevent them, and to take care of each other.

Steve Parker Zielinski  
Superintendent

