



LINDENWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

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

January 25, 2024

Lindenwold Middle School Families,

Today began as it should. Our middle schoolers came to school and went to their classrooms as expected. They all did a very good job. As students reported to homeroom, Dr. Lugo took time to address the student body as a whole with the [following message](#). ([Message](#)) Students who needed time to process were provided time to do so, and counseling staff were there to aid where needed.

District Staff, myself along with other District Administration, were on-site at LMS alongside our LMS Administration throughout the day yesterday and today to ensure students returned to their classrooms and their learning. Additional police presence began yesterday and will continue through the next few days. Although most of our LMS students were not directly involved, we all know, witnessing a fight is scary for everyone.

Yesterday, the District opted for a half-day in order to meet the needs of those students and staff who witnessed the event. Time was needed, and that need was prioritized.

Today the following was in place for all students:

- Student transitions were limited throughout the day.
 - Students were escorted from the auditorium in the a.m.
 - Students were escorted and had lunch in their classrooms today.
 - Students (7th/8th grade) were dismissed to classes in an orderly fashion by announcement and not the bell. This practice will continue throughout the remainder of the year.
 - Students were escorted to the auditorium in the p.m. for dismissal
- Dr. Lugo shared a statement with the entire student body
 - A lesson plan was developed by our mental health practitioners to guide staff and students through their processing.
 - Students processed concerns, thoughts, and questions and all students who wished to speak with an administrator or counselor was accommodated.
- As shared previously, there was an increased police presence, and there will continue to be for the next several days.
- After school clubs and activities have been canceled for this week and will be rescheduled at a later date.
- Students continued throughout their day to follow their schedules and learn alongside their classmates. Keeping a routine and schedule – as normal as possible – is always the recommended action.

Students were reminded today, and I also want to take a moment to reiterate what was shared with families yesterday: **ALL CELL PHONES ARE REQUIRED TO REMAIN IN A STUDENT'S BACKPACK.** Any student who has a cell phone in their possession **MUST** put it away in a locker or book bag. It may not be out for student use until further notice.

If a student refuses to comply with this directive, the phone will be confiscated by administration and a parent/guardian will be required to come to school to pick it up. It will not be released back into the

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student's care.

While I understand many of you want to know more specific details of what transpired, the school is not permitted to share details or student information at this time. Our students are juveniles. Any and all identifying information is protected. As such, no further information on this incident itself can be provided.

I ask that all families respect the above and keep in mind, every decision and every action is and was made in your child's best interest. The school operates from a place of fact and not rumor. We work in real-time and in concert with our local police department, fellow administration, and Prosecutor's Office as needed. At no time can we compromise an on-going investigation (police, school, legal, or otherwise).

If your child was involved in yesterday's incident, you were contacted. If your child stood by and video-taped, you were contacted. If your child received the video, and we learned your child shared it with others, you were contacted. If you were not contacted, your child had no known involvement in yesterday's event. **However, if your child has additional information related to yesterday's event, please contact the LMS Administration.**

We are not the only school or district who is addressing student behaviors such as this at the secondary level. Sadly, there are entire social media pages dedicated solely to posting school-based fights. Students actually receive social media "alerts" when a fight is shared. This takes place all across the country, from all backgrounds, all socio-economic levels, and all races. This is NOT just a Lindenwold problem, this is a community and national problem.

Unfortunately, individuals did take to social media and false information was shared. Doing so does hurt our community as a whole and makes it even more difficult on the school, students and staff as we are conducting our investigation. Families must understand the District adheres to our Safety Protocols, Code of Conduct, District Policy, and NJ law.

You may wish to once again review our District's Safety Protocol which was shared with all families at the beginning of the year and is maintained on [our District Website](#). The LMS Code of Conduct can be found here ([link](#)).

Our administration will always welcome questions, feedback and suggestions from our families. Families who contacted us out of concern and care were responded to as soon as we were able. However, we will not tolerate abusive conduct by anyone or toward anyone – including any and all members of our Lindenwold Staff. As an institution of education, we are all trying to teach our students how to effectively resolve conflicts. Threats, name calling, and the use of profane language contributes nothing positive to the conversation.

As you are aware, an LMS Parent Advisory Committee was established this year, and the next meeting date was shared by Dr. Lugo in the January Newsletter. **We already have a PAC meeting scheduled for next week – January 30th.** A reminder will be forth-coming from Dr. Lugo. Now is a time to work together and support one another by communicating the importance of school and the need to come to school ready to learn. **Again, please understand administration will still not be able to communicate specific details regarding the incident or any specific child. However, we can discuss ways we can unite and work together to move forward.**

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank the students for coming to talk with us today, for allowing grace where grace was needed, and for cooperating with the day's modifications.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil

Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil
Superintendent