

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We hope this letter finds you well. As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and secure learning environment for all students, we would like to inform you of the emergency drill requirements under New Jersey law and how our school will fulfill these requirements this year.

## **What the law requires**

Under New Jersey Revised Statutes 18A:41-1 (commonly referred to as the “Drill Law”), every school in New Jersey is required to conduct at least **one fire drill** and **one school security drill** each month during school hours (including during any summer instructional programs) for schools that are open.

A “school security drill” is defined as any exercise (other than a fire drill) designed to practice procedures for responding to an emergency (for example, non-fire evacuation, lockdown, active shooter situation, or bomb threat).

In addition, the law stipulates that for security drills:

- The drill must include age- and developmentally appropriate messaging at its conclusion, stating that it was a drill and that no current danger exists.
- The drill may **not** include fake blood, real or prop firearms, simulation of gun shots or explosions, or visuals/sounds likely to cause panic or trauma.
- The drill must be accessible and provide necessary accommodations for students with disabilities or mental-health conditions.
- A law enforcement officer must be present for at least one school security drill in each school year to make recommendations for improving procedures.

## **Types of drills**

While monthly fire drills and a monthly security drill are minimum requirements, schools are also expected to conduct a variety of drill types throughout the year. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Lockdown drills
- Bomb-threat response drills
- Non-fire evacuation drills (for example: gas leak, hazardous materials)

- Shelter-in-place drills
- Reverse-evacuation drills (bringing students inside from outdoors)
- Evacuation to an alternate relocation site
- Testing communication/notification systems or school-wide tabletop exercises

## **Notification to parents/guardians**

Effective under recent legislation (Public Law 2021, c.365), when a school security drill is conducted **while students are present**, the district/school is required to send a **written notification** to the parent or guardian **no later than the end of the school day** on which the drill is conducted.

It is important to note that this written notice requirement applies to *school security drills*, not fire drills.

## **What this means for our school**

- At our school, you can expect us to conduct at least one fire drill and one security drill each month.
- Following each security drill, you will receive a short written notice (through our Constant Contact system) by the end of that school day. That notice will state that we held a drill, reassure you that students resumed regular instruction immediately, and invite you to contact the school if you have questions.
- Our drills will be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to students' well-being, appropriate for their age, and mindful of minimizing anxiety.
- We will also conduct additional drills (lockdowns, evacuations, shelter-in-place, etc.) throughout the year, review our procedures, collaborate with emergency response partners, and update our safety plans accordingly.

## **Why do we do this**

Conducting regular drills and practicing responses helps prepare both students and staff for emergencies — should one ever occur — so that everyone knows what to do, where to go, and how to stay safe. These exercises also enable us to identify areas for improvement in our safety plans and to coordinate effectively with local emergency responders.

## How you can help

- Please speak with your child about the importance of drills—not as something to worry about, but as a preparation tool.
- Encourage your child to follow instructions promptly during drills and to treat them seriously.
- If your child expresses anxiety or concern related to drills, please contact the school so we can support them and provide appropriate context.
- Update your contact information with the school so we may reach you promptly in the unlikely event of an incident.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping our school community safe. If you have any questions about our emergency drill program, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

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