



Sachem Central School District

Samoset Administrative Office • 51 School Street • Lake Ronkonkoma, New York 11779

Kenneth E. Graham, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

(631) 471-1336
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August 27, 2018

Dear Sachem Families,

While all student success indicators are important to our decision-making, this year we will continue our focus on enhancements to our school safety as well as whole-child initiatives. As a district we are deeply committed to the safety and welfare of our students, staff and school district, and we have taken steps over the past year to continue to improve in these areas.

In the spring of 2018 students in grades 5-12 participated in the ED School Climate Survey. We saw this as a critical step forward in learning about our student's needs. A portion of the climate survey asked students questions involving safety, where they indicated they feel safe at school. Data also revealed that if they heard about a threat to a school or if they felt a student's safety was in jeopardy, they would report it to someone in authority. While we are pleased with this data, our ideal state is one in which all students and staff feel safe each day when they enter our buildings. Toward this end, we will continue to focus on activities and programs that seek to develop deeper connection between our students and the school community. You will have an opportunity to learn more about some of the programs that we have in place to deepen this connection as well as to learn about the findings of the school climate survey at upcoming Board of Education meetings.

You may be aware that this spring the district had a comprehensive Security Vulnerability Threat Assessment conducted. This assessment included a thorough review and analysis of our schools in terms of their safety and security. As a result of the findings, we have made the following immediate changes:

- All visitors seeking permission to enter any building on campus will be required to present ID. **There will be no exceptions.**
- Changes to traffic flow at certain schools – building principals will communicate the details with the families of impacted buildings.
- Revisions to protocols for arrival and dismissal at all schools.
- Throughout the school year we practice several unannounced safety drills to help our students know what to do in an emergency. These drills will help the district review practices and make revisions as necessary. **All drills will be unannounced.**
- Upgrades to the handheld radio system for district security communication.
- Bus stops will no longer be listed on the district website; however, they will be accessible via the Parent Portal.



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Throughout the 2018-19 school year we will continue to review and implement recommendations from our security audit. Future enhancements and upgrades will be shared with the community as they are proposed and implemented. Additionally, as a part of the 2018-19 voter-approved budget, there will be a uniformed security guard at each elementary school, an additional guard at each middle school and increased camera coverage at each school.

This spring our staff had the opportunity to participate in training by the Suffolk County Department of Homeland Security. This training was well-received by our staff, and we will host a similar presentation for parents about active shooter situations, which will be presented by the Suffolk County Department of Homeland Security in the fall.

Lastly, we are still awaiting the final approval to move forward with our Smart Schools Investment Plan. You may recall that New York State approved a bond in 2014, which set aside approximately \$2 billion in funding to be distributed throughout districts across New York for technology and security upgrades. Sachem's allocation was \$11,060,086. Our plan includes the construction of security vestibules, additional security cameras and a visitor management system at each school. We have been waiting for the approval of the plan for over a year now, which has been extremely frustrating, but all districts throughout the state have a similar wait time. Recently, there have been some changes made to the approval process. As a result of the changes, we have been in communication with the Smart Schools Office at the New York State Education Department, and we are optimistic about the approval process moving forward. The moment that we receive the approval from NYSED, we will communicate with our community and begin construction on the security vestibules.

In the coming months, we will hold various presentations for security and safety:

- Adoption of the annual districtwide Safety Plan and Presentation on Creating Deeper Connections with Students – August 29, 2018 – Board of Education Room at 7:30 p.m.
- Security Vulnerability Threat Assessment Findings – Board of Education meeting on September 12, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Samoset Auditorium.
- Parent presentation by the Suffolk County Department of Homeland Security – October 3, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Samoset Auditorium.
- 2017-18 Academic and Climate Survey Results – Board of Education meeting on October 10, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Room.

As a district we are committed to ongoing improvements to school safety and security, and we will continue to enhance our working relationship with all local law enforcement agencies, including the Suffolk County Police Department, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department and Suffolk Emergency Management Services.

We hope that security upgrades and drills for various scenarios are practice for a situation that we never have to face. However, please note that in the event of a real emergency situation, parents and guardians will be notified through



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our School Messenger notification system. Therefore, it is imperative for parents and guardians to make certain that the most up-to-date phone numbers and email addresses have been provided to the school so that you will always receive important information in the event of an emergency. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to call the main office of the school that your child attends.

We look forward to working with you as partners to offer our students another terrific school experience. Enjoy the remaining days of summer.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth E. Graham".

Kenneth E. Graham, Superintendent of Schools