A Message From Our Superintendent:

Updating Safety Plans and Procedures at Fillmore

The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut occurred on Friday, December 14, 2013. Following the tragedy, the Board of Education and I discussed a thorough plan to evaluate our safety and emergency plans and procedures with experts from the community. Our Board of Education felt we needed to do a thorough review of our plans and make some changes, but they wanted to make sure the changes were reasonable and not reactive. Following the tragedy, several parents and community members contacted me to ask what our plans were to ensure Fillmore School will continue to be a safe place to learn well into the future and most of them offered suggestions to increase safety. We also held a faculty meeting and heard specific concerns and suggestions that needed to be addressed by several faculty members. Our plans to improve security addresses the concerns shared by the Board of Education, faculty, parents, community members, local and state officials.

Since we started this process, the Fillmore School District Administration and staff members have met with the New York State Police, Allegany County Sheriff’s Department, Allegany Emergency Management and our local Fire Departments to review our safety plans and procedures. Our goal was to review and update our safety plans and procedures while doing our best to maintain the safe, warm, caring and personal environment that our community values. It is important to remember that Fillmore has been a safe school for many decades. We certainly are not taking this for granted, but it is helpful to remember this in order to remain calm and keep things in perspective.

Below are the changes that are underway: State, County and local officials along with administration and staff reviewed immediate emergency plans and procedures to begin the process

**Locking the front door during school hours:** The front door to our school will be updated to include an automatic locking/unlocking system, two video cameras, and an intercom system which will be installed within the next month. Our district and high school office staff members will be able to view each person who approaches the front door via cameras by the front door. The visitor will need to press a button and speak into the intercom to announce who they are and why they need to enter the school. Office staff will be able to give the person directions regarding how to proceed when they enter the building and they will then press a button that will automatically unlock the door and allow the person to enter the building. Whenever you increase security it decreases convenience. We know having the front door locked will slow down all traffic. We also know this is one of the significant ways to increase security and safety.

**Dock Door:** The dock door will be outfitted with security cameras and an intercom system as well. During the school day we receive deliveries from several companies. Office staff will now be able to identify anyone who needs to enter the dock door to make a delivery. Staff and students who arrive at school after 8:30 AM and park out back will also be able to enter the secure dock door as a result of the video camera and intercom system.

**Lock Box:** Local law enforcement and fire officials requested that we install a lock box near the front door which will contain a key that will allow them to enter the building quickly in case of an emergency. Whenever there is an emergency either during the school day or after school it is important that local law enforcement and fire officials can enter the building quickly.

**Revision of Emergency Plans:** All emergency drills were reviewed, discussed and revised by the agencies mentioned above. These plans are organized into a flip chart and will be posted in every classroom by the classroom telephone to make them easily accessible to any teacher in the room in a matter of seconds. In order to make sure all staff and students are aware of and understand these drills we will explain and practice all drills regularly.

**Substitute Teachers:**  Our lock down drill requires all teachers to lock their classroom doors. Previously, our substitute teachers did not have the means to do this. Now, all substitute teachers will receive a key to the classroom(s) they are teaching in when they come in to substitute for the day. They will be required to return the key prior to leaving the building at the end of every day.

**Working with local officials:** I am extremely pleased by the communication and support from all local police, fire and emergency planners. They have generously offered their time, effort and knowledge to ensure we have the most up to date emergency plans of any school in the state. We have shared our blueprints and emergency plans with them and will continue to look for opportunities to allow them to become more familiar with our building and conduct drills in our building after hours. The more familiar they are with our building the better prepared they will be to respond to an emergency if it is needed.

**Conclusion:**  The changes we are implementing above will make our building more secure. Safety is a top priority at Fillmore. At the same time, we will continue to work to maintain the safe, warm,caring and personal environment that our community values. If you have any questions regarding any of the changes above, please feel free to contact me at 585-567-2251.

**Fillmore School is Designated a Red Cross Community Shelter – Training for Volunteers**

Fillmore School has always been a hub of the community, especially in times of need. Continuing with this tradition, I have been working with the local Red Cross Chapter to designate Fillmore as a Certified Community Shelter. **On Monday, March 11, from 3:30-5:30 pm, we will host an informational meeting in the auditorium to share the procedures and practices that will be followed if our school needs to be used as a shelter facility.** The entire community is invited to attend. All attendees will be certified as having completed the Shelter Operations Workshop and will be identified as volunteers in case Fillmore School is used as a Shelter Facility. Please save the date and attend if you can.

Ravo Root