

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

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August 23, 2018

Dear Parents,

I hope you have had a wonderful summer with your children and that you have had the opportunity to enjoy all that our community has to offer. We have been hard at work planning for the upcoming school year, and I would like to update you on some key points:

School Safety and Security

In the Spring, we held community conversations regarding our school safety and security in partnership with the Narragansett Police Department and the Town of Narragansett. Those meetings helped us frame our security upgrades so that we are addressing issues specific to Narragansett while also following best practices and incorporating the recommendations of local and national school security experts. Each principal will be sending a letter home detailing more specifically how security is being addressed at each building. While I will not go into detail about every aspect of our security enhancements across the district, highlights include:

Facilities: We have strengthened our entry points, upgraded locksets on classroom and entry doors, and installed alarm bars on emergency exits. Additionally, we have upgraded our video monitoring system with additional cameras and direct connections to the Narragansett Police Department.

Personnel and Training: We are pleased to welcome Officer Kevin O’Conner of the Narragansett Police Department as our additional School Resource Officer. Officer O’Conner joins Officer Kyle Rooney as our second SRO and will spend time at both Narragansett Pier Middle School and Narragansett Elementary School.

This summer, a district team and members of the Narragansett Police were trained as instructors for the [ALICE](https://www.alicetraining.com/) protocol (<https://www.alicetraining.com/>). ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) is a nationally recognized comprehensive program that teaches individuals what their options are in a violent intruder or active shooter situation. We will be training all staff members and, in an age appropriate way, students in the first weeks of school.

We will hold a parent information meeting for all schools regarding the ALICE training on Thursday, September 13th at 7 PM in the Narragansett High School auditorium.

Our school leadership and security teams have conducted training exercises with Narragansett emergency services, including scenario and on-site drills and other activities to increase our level of preparedness. We will continue to conduct these drills throughout the year. All staff will go through additional security

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training in the professional development days that are scheduled before school opens for the year, and will also have training throughout the school year.

We will work with students in the first weeks of school to familiarize them with the ALICE protocols as well as to help them know what to do should an emergency occur. We have also planned both announced and unannounced drills throughout the year.

Technology: We have installed a “swipe card” system in all schools to regulate and monitor access to the buildings. Additionally, each school will have a system to scan a visitor’s identification to do an instant background check. Finally, we have upgraded our communication system to ensure we are able to connect with first responders and families in the event of an emergency.

Processes and Procedures: All schools have revised entry and exit processes to restrict access to one or two entry points. Additionally, the procedures for checking in visitors and establishing identity and purpose, monitoring hallways and perimeters, and ensuring orderly and safe arrival and dismissal have been enhanced. Our emergency drills and evacuation processes have been revised to reflect current best practices and the ALICE protocols, and we continue to work with the Narragansett Police and our School Resource Officers to improve other processes as necessary.

Student and Family Supports: All schools will continue to focus on supporting student mental health and well-being. We have a full-time school psychologist available to students at each school, a district wide school social worker, and guidance counselors available to all students grades 5-12. At our middle and high schools, teams are updating and enhancing our advisory curriculum, and we are introducing an updated social-emotional curriculum in the elementary school. We will also be implementing the [Sandy Hook Promise](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/) (<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/>) programs this year in support of student connections to one another and mental health awareness, with the first event, *Start with Hello*, scheduled to take place in September.

Facilities Upgrades

Our maintenance staff and operations director have been hard at work preparing for the school year. The major project for the summer has been replacing the HVAC system at the Narragansett Pier Middle School. The construction crew worked diligently all summer and we expect significant improvement in the temperature and humidity levels in the school this year.

Staffing

Due to a number of retirements at the end of last year, we are pleased to welcome 14 new teachers to our district this year. Our new hires were selected from hundreds of applicants and bring a wide range of experience and a strong knowledge base to our schools. Each of our new faculty members went through a rigorous hiring process, including interviewing with a committee of teachers, parents, and students, teaching model lessons, and then interviewing with the administrative team. Our new teacher orientation begins next week, and we are delighted to have them on board.

Our search for a Narragansett Elementary School Principal this summer did not identify a candidate who met the criteria and standards we have in place for the next leader of NES. Fortunately, Mrs. Dandurand is

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willing to continue in the role until we find the right person, and we plan to reopen the search later this year.

Career and Technical Education Program Enhancement:

This year will be the beginning of our new [Mechanical Trades- Plumbing](#) Program at Narragansett High School in partnership with the local Plumbers and Pipefitters Union. Students who enter the program will graduate with the opportunity to become a full apprentice in Local 51 or apply their learning in other local skilled trade or manufacturing professions. This new student opportunity joins our [Agriscience and Computer Science](#) programs, and all of our Career and Tech programs are open to students from Narragansett and other RI towns. Please contact Joan Pratley at Narragansett High School at 792-9406 or jpratley@nssk12.org should your child be interested in any of these programs

Expanded Preschool Opportunities

This year we will offer expanded low cost full-day or half-day preschool opportunities for all Narragansett families. We are pleased that over 70 students have already registered, and we anticipate the continued growth of this much needed program. If you are interested in registering a student for this year or next year, please contact Leslie Brow, Director of Student Services, at 792-9426.

I am looking forward to the beginning of the school year, and hope to see many of you at our school events this Fall. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 792-9450 or email at pcummings@nssk12.org.

Thank you, and enjoy these final days of August!

Sincerely,



Peter J. Cummings, Ed.D
Superintendent