



## LINDENWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

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

January 24, 2024

Lindenwold Families,

Out of abundance of care and concern for our students and staff, the Lindenwold Middle School dismissed early today on Wednesday, January 24, 2024. All after school events were also canceled for today, Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

As many of you may have already heard, there was a student altercation of a serious nature at LMS today that many of our students and staff witnessed. We need to take a moment to prioritize our students' and staff mental health and take time to come together as a staff to plan for tomorrow. Please understand this decision was not made lightly.

School will reopen and operate on a normal operating schedule tomorrow, Thursday, January 25, 2024. Please know the following immediate steps have already been taken:

- Additional full-day police presence were present today, and will be present for a minimum of this week into next week.
- Additional counseling services will be made available for any student or staff member who is in need.
- Students who chose to engage in this altercation in any manner (participation, video-taping, blocking access to the hallway) have been addressed and the fullest extent of our Code of Conduct will be implemented.
- Legal actions are being pursued as appropriate.

**However, now is a time to come together because WE NEED YOUR HELP as a community:**

- Please speak with your children about the dangers of fighting. **NO STUDENT** may ever put their hands on another individual. That is considered assault.
- Please reinforce with your children the need for schools to be a safe space for our **students and staff**. **NO CHILD or STAFF MEMBER** should need to worry about their safety when they are inside our buildings. It is also important to strongly emphasize the consequences of such actions.
- Please check your child's social media use. Review their cell phone messages, their gaming, and their instant messaging habits. Many of the issues we are addressing and dealing with are coming into our schools through social media or instant messaging practices.
- Please speak with your children about the seriousness of threats and discuss the language you wish them to use when interacting with others. The use of profanity, vulgarity, and sexual statements/messages are not appropriate when speaking to one another.

- Please communicate with your children about the dangers and the seriousness of observing an altercation and making the choice to not get help but rather to stand there, watch, and record.
- It is essential students know that sharing such videos is equally as damaging to individuals – socially and emotionally as well as a violation of their privacy. The school district takes this matter very seriously.

While as a parent, I understand the need to get in touch with your children; however, it is really important for phones to be kept in bookbags. ***Please be on notice - Administration will confiscate any and all cell phones that are out without permission. Parent pick-up will be required.***

Please help us. We are asking all families to speak with your children about the negative impact of social media, the potential harm it may inflict on others, and school related consequences. Events that happen outside of school and negatively impact the school daily operations are STILL concerns of the school district. It is imperative that we work together on these issues as social media cyberbullying and similar types of behavior have become common sources of bullying across our country in recent years. **Cyberbullying is a serious problem, and the impact to others can be significant. This conduct is now impacting the safety of our children.**

**Students need to understand this is not a game, and this is not funny. Physically and emotionally harming others can have very serious unintentional consequences.**

#### **Important to Know and Understand:**

It is imperative that we recognize this type of conduct does not reflect the decision making of the majority of our students; however, it does lend itself to defining the overall reputation of our community. This behavior hurts all of us and our community as a whole.

#### **STOP IT App**

The District has implemented an app called Stop It which has been communicated to families and students throughout this school year. Families and students may report concerns to the district anonymously. Once reported, the District will investigate the reported concerns.

To find the STOP IT app, you can locate it on our district website or download it directly to your phone. STOP IT has been posted on our main website page ([www.lindenwold.k12.nj.us](http://www.lindenwold.k12.nj.us)). It has also been posted on our District Safety Page. You can find it under the Parent's Tab from our main district website: (<https://www.lindenwold.k12.nj.us/Page/325>).

**To learn more - please check out the Parent STOP IT Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpg-bli0xas>

Families, we really need your help to reinforce the importance of “if you see something – say something.” Our staff can not intervene when we do not have the necessary information. This is a time when we all need to come together to communicate and reinforce the same message consistently here at school and consistently also at home. **Physical violence does not belong in our schools, will not be tolerated, and students will be held responsible for their choices and actions.**

Sincerely,

*Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil*

Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil  
Lindenwold School District Superintendent

**Our Town – Our Children – Our Future**

