MILTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186

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To: Milton Public Schools Parents, Guardians, Faculty & Staff
From: Mary C. Gormley, Superintendent of Schools
Re: E-Update, Wednesday, April 21, 2010

Our Stay in Place/Lockdown Policy

The recent discoveries of live ammunition on the Milton High School campus, as well as the subsequent lockdowns of Milton High have impacted students throughout the Milton Public Schools over the past several weeks.

As I stated in my last E-blast, a suspect has been identified in the April 13th incident and is now facing both criminal charges and school administrative action.

In addition to sending out E-blasts and fielding phone calls on this issue, the Milton Public Schools administration and the Milton Police hosted a forum in the Charles C. Winchester Auditorium for all Milton Public School parents last week.

The intention was to both educate our parents as to the necessity of Stay In Place/Lockdown procedures and also answer any questions they may have regarding these incidents and our lockdown policy.

Milton Police Chief Richard Wells was at this event, along with me, Principal Dr. John Drottar, members of the leadership team of the Milton Public Schools and several Milton Police personnel. The event was well-attended and provided a much-needed forum for comments and questions. Among the points discussed:

- Our Alert-Now emails were sent to parents as soon as it was deemed safe to do so. The decision as to when to send the alert, in all cases, was a joint decision made by me and Chief Wells.
- We are considering the installation of video surveillance cameras in and around Milton High School. We are consulting with the Milton Police Department and looking into funding sources for this project.
- Parents/guardians who have a firearm license should double check their weapons and an ammunition supply to be sure nothing is missing. Take this opportunity to be sure all weapons are kept in a secure location.
- Police Chief Wells and I encouraged all of the parents who attended the forum and I am strongly encouraging you now to take the time to sit down with your children to discuss the recent issues. Communicate to your children that if they have information of any kind about the recent incidents they can speak with you or any adult in our schools. Your children have to be encouraged to share any information they have without the fear of punishment or discipline from you or any adult within our schools.

We know that the recent events have been troubling for all members of our community. However, there are some children for whom the past few weeks have been overwhelming. One of our MHS parents who

works as a clinical psychologist sent me some of the following suggestions to help parents or students who may be struggling.

- Be available – let your child know you are here and available to listen (and talk). Kids are different—some will want to talk, others will not.
- Be around – this a good time to arrange your schedule so that you are more available. Teens can be hard to read and you never know when they want to talk. If you are around, they may just hang out and visit. Just knowing you are there can be a comfort (even if they refuse to acknowledge it).
- Build in some family time – it's vacation week, see if you can find time to do something that you enjoy with your kids – eating out, watching a movie or take a drive. When you are doing something together, there are opportunities for talking and less time to sit alone and ruminate.
- If your child is showing signs of significant worry or anxiety (for example, being afraid to go to school, leave the house, wanting you by his or her side), contact your doctor or a healthcare professional.

All six of our Milton Public Schools have conducted drills on the implementation of a lockdown. In addition, we continuously conduct fire drills and other safety drills to ensure that all our students are familiar with our safety procedures.

If parents have any further questions or information about these incidents for either the Milton Police Department or the Milton Public Schools, please call the following numbers: Milton Police: 617-698-3800 or my office at 617-696-4809.

Changes to our World Language Programs

After a thorough review by the Elementary World Language Committee, we have made several significant changes to the elementary school program:

- Reinstatement of one 30 minute per week FLES period to the First Grade English Program.
- Alternate Assignment – the use of a "Tiered Lottery" system to determine school placement when and if there is an **over enrollment** of students in either French Immersion or English/FLES program at their home school.
- For those who select the French Immersion Program, there will no longer be "Grandfathering" for siblings if your child is assigned to a school other than your Home School. (This will only affect incoming grade one students.)
- Parents must choose a program and submit the necessary paperwork by April 30th. If you do not have the proper forms, visit this link: http://www.miltonps.org/documents/Grade_1_Choice_Form.pdf

Parents who are interested in obtaining more information about the World Language Program changes are encouraged to view the presentation from our recent Grade One Information Night. This is available at: http://www.miltonps.org/documents/Grade_1_Presentation.pdf

Incoming Kindergarten Student Information

Parents must register their incoming kindergarteners by April 30th so administration can make school assignments. Please complete the "New Student Registration Packet" available on our website www.miltonps.org in the "About" section or contact Denise Kelly at dkelly@miltonps.org or 617-696-4470 x5510.

Teacher Awards

Two of our Milton Public School teachers have recently been selected for prestigious awards.

Congratulations to **Michael McCormick**, Cunningham School kindergarten teacher, who has just been awarded the 2010 Milton Early Childhood Alliance Professional Recognition Award!

Please join with Michael to celebrate his dedication and fine work with Milton's young children and families at the *Professional Recognition Awards Banquet* on Wednesday, April 28th at 6:30pm in The Common Market Restaurant, 97 Willard Street in Quincy. Tickets are $25 per person and reservations are required. For more information: http://www.miltonearlychildhoodalliance.org/ProfessionalRecognition.asp

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Also, please help me to congratulate Pierce Middle School teacher **Jenifer Gilbert**, who has been selected as one of Massachusetts' recipients for the Amgen Award for Science Teaching Excellence (AASTE). She is one of only four teachers in the state who won this award. Her accomplishment also means that Pierce Middle School has been granted a restricted cash award to be applied to the purchase of school equipment, supplies or teaching resources. Great job! Here is a link to the Patriot Ledger article on her award: http://www.patriotledger.com/news/x53547384/Milton-teacher-wins-teaching-award

PAC/Special Education News

Another reminder: The Pierce "Roundtable" will be held on Monday **April 26th** at 7pm. Parents of Pierce students and incoming 6th graders, and all other interested parties are invited to attend a Special Education Roundtable Discussion in the Pierce Library. The event is being co-sponsored by the PAC and the Milton Public Schools. Assistant Superintendent John Phelan, Director of Pupil/Personnel Services Jeff Rubin, and Pierce Principal James Jette will present an overview of current and future special education programs at the middle school. Parents are encouraged to attend, ask questions and share their experiences! Light refreshments will be served.

Student Accolades

Finally, I have one last bit of good news to close this newsletter. Milton High's own DJ Santos was recently named to the Fox 25 All-Star Basketball Team.

DJ Santos was the leading scorer on our high school team that went 19-5 this season. Santos averaged 16 points per game and helped the Wildcats reach the championships. Click below to see the segment which aired on the evening news:

http://www.myfoxboston.com/dpp/sports/hs_friday/all-fox25-basketball-team-announced-2010416

I am sure DJ appreciates all the help his school community gave him by voting for him over the last couple of weeks.