

Roxbury Township Public Schools

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

I write to welcome you to the start of a new school year, but also hope that you will welcome me as the Interim Superintendent in Roxbury. As the summer winds down and September is only a few days away, I also must share a significant amount of information that I hope you will find helpful as we approach September 6th. Be assured that our goal is to provide every student with the best educational experience possible. Whether the student(s) in your family is joining us for the first time or you are a returning member of our school community, I assure you that our administrative, maintenance, and custodial staffs have worked hard to have everything ready for the opening of school on September 6th. A positive and stimulating education experience is critical for future success in our increasingly complex and challenging world. I have every reason to believe that the student(s) in your family will grow both socially and intellectually during the coming year. It has been my experience over 35 years that one of the key ingredients in ensuring communities have great schools is parental involvement. There is no doubt that one of the key factors which make schools successful is the ongoing support and active participation of the parent community. I look forward to working with the Roxbury parent community just like I do with administrators and teachers. I encourage your active participation in the PTA of the school your student attends.

I share with you that it is important parents do not wait until the end of the year to tell a principal, another administrator, or me about concerns they had during the school year. Our recommended process is for parents to have a conversation with a teacher if there is any issue that arises large or small. Frequently, a teacher will share your concern and working together it can be resolved quickly and amicably. In all cases, it is most helpful and productive for parents to have direct contact with a teacher. No one can explain what happened, the purpose of an assignment or the goal of a lesson in the same detail as the teacher. If after meeting with a teacher you still have concerns, then it is appropriate to bring the issue to the building principal. In some cases, you may want to bring an issue to my attention, but I can assure that our meeting or phone conference will be much more productive if you have spoken with the principal first. If you call my office, we will be glad to make a time for us to meet or speak on the phone. If you prefer to send an email, that is fine as well. In all cases nothing will be gained by waiting until it is too late for us to rectify the issue. We are glad to meet with you to help ensure your child has a positive experience in school. I also point out that sometimes we need to engage you in supporting our efforts at home. Setting aside homework time, reading together, discussing what happened and what was discussed in school sends an important message that will have a positive impact on the approach to school work for years to come.

Due to the increased amount of information that the district is obligated to provide you with prior to the start of school, I am going to address a number of items in bulleted form hoping that you will be able to segregate those issues for the start of school and during the year when appropriate. I recognize there is a great deal of information that is confusing and encourage you to contact my office (973-584-6099 x 5001) if we can be of assistance. It is also likely that the school your child attends can be helpful in these matters. If you have something important that you wish to share with me directly, please feel free to send an email to joneill@roxbury.org but I advise you to please put the word “parent” in the subject line because I simply cannot recognize the source of many of the emails that I receive and, therefore, may inadvertently delete yours if I am not aware it is from a school family.

Please note each of the following:

- **Honeywell Instant Alert** - Our method of contacting parents for emergencies will continue to be the Honeywell Instant Alert notification. Instant Alert is an extremely effective tool in reaching people through multiple means of communication in a very short period of time. We use the Instant Alert to advise people about school closings, delayed openings or early dismissals and any other emergency that we think it is important for you to know about in a timely manner. We have posted a set of directions on our website, www.roxbury.org under “Parents/Community” tab “Useful Links to Community Resources” that will walk you step-by-step through what you need to do to register your family on the Instant Alert system. Instant Alert is internet based allowing each family to maintain a secure password protected online profile. The directions will provide you with information for accessing this system and creating your profile. You can log on to your profile at any time to update your contact information. Maintaining the accuracy of your profile will increase the ability of the school district to keep you informed. Your online profile will enable you to:
 - input your personal contact information
 - select which type of school information you would like to receive on each of your contact devices
 - send yourself a text message to make sure your text messaging contact information is entered correctly
 - add contact information of other caretakers of your children, such as, a grandparent or neighbor
 - designate these caretakers as the main contact for your children if you are out of town

It is important that new families enter the appropriate information and returning families update cell phone numbers and any other changes. If you need assistance with your profile, please send an email to: InstantAlertHelp@Honeywell.com. If you do not have access to a computer currently, please feel free to come to any one of our schools to enter the data requested.

You will notice in the drop-down bar at the top of the page there are five categories. You can sign-up for the information you want to receive via the various communication devices.

- #1 is High Importance. School closings and emergencies will come with a High Importance notice in the subject line. Credible reports of an incident that may be of concern to parents will be reported as High Importance. ***We encourage all parents to sign up for this notification.***
- #2 on the list is School Information. This is information that in most cases will be specific to the school your child attends. It may come from any one of our seven schools or it may come from the Central Office, but will only be directed to one school. I encourage you to sign up for these notices as well as emergencies. We are

required to advise you when there will be an early dismissal from school. This is the method we will use to comply with this mandate.

- #3 is Transportation. We do not anticipate using this category.
 - # 4 is Activities. We do not anticipate using this to any great extent so this category may be one that you would put in email only rather than all of the other devices of communication available.
 - #5 is General – PTA information only – Both the District and Building PTA’s have a great deal of information to share with you periodically during the school year. I encourage you to have these notices sent where you will see them daily but you may only want to receive an email or a text.
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- **School Integrated Pest Management System** - We are obligated to provide this information; it is included as an attachment to this letter.

 - **Student Safety** - I remind you that even though we live in a wonderful community, unfortunate things have happened in similar communities, and it is important that you have ongoing discussions with your children about being alert as they walk or ride their bikes to and from school. It is also important that they report immediately to a school official or a parent anything untoward that happens as they go between home and school.

 - **Cameras** - You are advised that there are cameras at the entrance to all of our school buildings and some cameras in the buildings. These cameras are for the purpose of identifying any intruder after hours and will help us identify individuals who take or vandalize school property. There is no intent to monitor students through the use of cameras, but they are available and they are running 24 hours a day. Principals will provide you with more specific information.

 - **Lockers** - As you may know, the courts have determined that lockers, even though they are used by students, are school property and school officials reserve the right to inspect lockers if there is a concern that dangerous items or illegal substances may be present. We reserve the right to do this without notification.

 - **Family Life letter** - Each school will send you a letter which outlines the topics that will be covered in our Family Life curriculum during the course of the school year. Parents are welcome to review that information, and parents have a right to opt their student out of a particular session that may be contrary to your family’s personal values or religious beliefs. You do not have the right to opt your student out of the whole course, but there may be certain lessons for which you would rather your child receive an alternate assignment. It is your obligation to make this known to the teacher and the school administration.

 - **New Jersey Smart Database** - The state of New Jersey has undertaken to have a database that has all of the pertinent information about students so they can track their progress as they move from one school to another, perhaps from one district to another, and also as they progress through their standardized testing. Some families were understandably reticent to provide us with all of the information necessary for the NJ Smart Database, but I must impress on you that this is information that we have and must share with the state. The state has assured us multiple times that it is an extremely secure site and that there is a significant benefit from the fact that data can be shared with a new district when a student relocates from one district to another.

- **Technology** - The school Board and the community have been extremely supportive of our increased utilization of technology. This has had a significant impact on the way teachers teach and the way students learn, but it also has required the allocation of significant funds. It is important that you impress on your child that this is school property; it is paid for by taxpayer money; and they must be respectful of it at all times. It is also important that you impress on your child that tampering or going into the system is a crime, and we will be aggressive about pressing charges to ensure that students are not engaged in inappropriate or illegal activities.
- **Parental Rights** - Parents have the right to look at your child's student folder during the course of the school year. Please note, however, that you need to make an appointment to review the contents of that folder. You should arrange that time with the principal's secretary or School Counseling Office. Please advise the office of the reason for your visit so the file can be available for your review.
- **Our website** (www.roxbury.org) has allowed us to provide you with information in a timely fashion. As noted above, if there is a school closing or other emergency it will be posted on the website. We also have most, if not all, of the forms that the district uses available on the website, and you are encouraged to become familiar with that website and download those forms as you may need them during the course of the school year. You will find it easy to access Board policies and view both the minutes of previous board meetings as well as the agenda for an upcoming Board of Education meeting. The website also provides easy access to central office and building staff. Please note that when it comes to delayed openings and school closings we will make our decision with student and staff safety in mind. The final decision about sending a child to school when there is inclement weather is the parents. Our decision is based on what is best for most; your decision may differ because of unique issues in your own community or on your street. We accept your right to make this final decision.

There are additional notifications that we are required to advise you of annually and the following information relates to those notifications.

- **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** - This is the federal law that requires the Roxbury Township School District, with certain exceptions, to obtain your written consent prior to disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, the school district may disclose appropriate designated "directory information" without written consent unless you have advised the district to the contrary. The primary purpose of the directory information is to allow the school district to include this type of information from your child's educational records in certain school publications. Examples of these publications may be: the annual yearbook, honor roll or other recognitions, graduation programs, a playbill indicating your student's role in a production, sports activity sheets with rosters, and for some sports like wrestling, showing weight and height of teams as well as members of the orchestra, chorus, or band.

Directory information which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released can also be disclosed to outside organizations without parents' prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to: companies that manufacture products for schools, e.g., class rings or yearbooks. Two federal laws require local school districts to provide military recruiters upon request with three categories of information typically in school directories – names, address, and telephone numbers. This is

true unless parents have advised the school district that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

If you do not want the Roxbury School District to disclose directory information from your child's educational records without your prior written consent, you must notify the district in writing by September 8th. Please address this information to the principal of the school that your child attends. The School District has designated the following information as directory information, and we may or may not reveal the following information:

- Student's Name
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph
- Degrees, honors and awards received
- Date and place of birth
- Date of attendance
- Grade level

Once again, I urge you to notify the principal in writing if you do not wish any of this information to be shared without your specific permission. I point out that such a notice to the district will preclude us from including your child's name or picture when a group is recognized for a particular performance or achievement. In the past, we were able to accommodate parental requests with a specific list of what is and what is not allowed to be published. We can no longer provide this individual accommodation. Almost all newspapers now have a website where they post the latest news and the most recent newspaper. This is just one example of why we can no longer accommodate "split" requests. We no longer have control of what happens once a picture is in a publication. Therefore, you must choose whether or not to allow your child is to be in all publications, news releases, etc. We are not able to individualize these permissions.

A second aspect of the FERPA law affords parents of students over 18 certain rights with respect to student education records.

Notification of rights under FERPA for public school students K-12 - We will exercise our best judgment when making decisions about distribution of educational information for valid purposes.

- **Immunizations** – There were new immunization regulations effective over the past two years, and we have posted those on our website. These immunizations have been the cause of some controversy and even some potential legal battles; but in the meantime, they remain the law in the state of New Jersey and the school district has an obligation to abide by them. We have also enclosed a copy of the minimal immunization requirement for school attendance in New Jersey.
- **AHERA – Asbestos** – I am advising you that a number of years ago we had our schools inspected by an EPA accredited building inspector. Since that time, we have had construction that included additions and retro-fitting at each of our schools and as any of that asbestos was disrupted, it was removed from the building. It is also true that there continues to be some asbestos in our buildings, but it is important for you to know that the materials are

in a form and condition that does not pose a health threat to students, faculty or employees. We have continued to embark on asbestos removal from our buildings and engage in some of that on an annual basis, including some that was removed this past summer. As we continue to move toward asbestos-free schools, I emphasize again that the asbestos that is present in our schools is not typically where students are present, and certainly is not in a form or condition that offers any potential health hazard. Additional information on this topic will be posted on our website as appropriate.

- **Food Service:** There will be important information about the lunch program on the individual website of each school.
- **Highly Qualified Teachers** – As a result of the No Child Left Behind legislation and initiatives taken by the state of New Jersey there are requirements for providing students with Highly Qualified Teachers. Be assured that we have Highly Qualified Teachers in each of our classrooms. On a rare occasion, there is something that happens subsequent to an individual's employment that may call that status into question, and I can assure you that our Human Resources Office pursues those issues diligently.
- **Vandalism** – I remind the community that the schools are the greatest common asset the community owns. It is important that adults and students alike respect Board of Education property and facilities. Any damage to school property will be investigated and charges will be filed. We appreciate your cooperation in reporting and identifying anyone who is vandalizing school property.
- **Calendar** – The official calendar for the school year is on the website. Changes will be posted as they are approved.

I know this is a lot of information to digest, but we want you to have as much information as will be helpful to you before school starts. I hope you find the information beneficial.

The economic downturn in our nation has made these challenging times for everyone and difficult times for some of our neighbors, friends, and relatives. We know however, from experience, that challenging times offer great opportunities for innovation and creativity. Education is a joint effort between parents and educators. We embark on the new school year with enthusiasm and look forward to a year filled with positive experiences for students which will be a benefit to the entire community.

Sincerely,



Jim O'Neill
Interim Superintendent

School Integrated Pest Management Policy

The New Jersey School Integrated Pest Management Act of 2002 requires schools to implement a school integrated pest management policy. The law requires the superintendent of the school district, for each school in the district, to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedures to control pests and minimize exposure of children, faculty, and staff to pesticides. Each school in the Roxbury Township School District shall, therefore, develop and maintain an IPM plan as part of the school's policy.

Integrated Pest Management Procedures - Implementation of IPM procedures will determine when to control pests and whether to use mechanical, physical, cultural, biological, or chemical methods. Applying IPM principles prevents unacceptable levels of pest damage by the most economical means and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Each school in the district shall consider the full range of management options, including no action at all. Non-pesticide pest management methods are to be used whenever possible. The choice of using a pesticide shall be based on a review of all other available options and a determination that these options are not effective or not reasonable. When it is determined that a pesticide must be used, low impact pesticides and methods are preferred and shall be considered for use first.

There have been some suggestions that turf fields are a potential source of pesticides. This is not an issue with the field installed at Roxbury High School. If there is a legitimate concern about a particular field we will have it tested. When other fields like ours have been tested it has been determined they pose no threat to student health. Such reports have been determined to be unnecessarily alarming.

This is just one of many reasons why parents should be sure that the school nurse in your child's building is aware of any allergies or serious health issues.