



HIGHLANDS HIGH SCHOOL 2016-2017
WHY NOT US? WHY NOT NOW?
BUILDING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE



Dear Highlands Community,

As our school and law enforcement investigations progress, we wanted to take a moment to update you on the school security situation that occurred after school on Wednesday, February 15th, 2017.

Shortly after school dismissal, a student who had left school at the end of the school day returned to the building without permission. The student in question was carrying a backpack, and it had been reported that the student had placed an object into the backpack while off campus. Our security team and school based police officer, as well as our Dean of Students, and principals immediately took action and pursued the student. The student left the backpack in a nearby yard where it was retrieved by school officials. The bag was found to contain a firearm the student had retrieved from off of the school campus.

The Harrison Township Police Department was immediately contacted as the local law enforcement agency and quickly responded with multiple units. The student was detained by law enforcement officers and a full investigation into the matter conducted.

After resolving the immediate safety concern, a full sweep of the school building was conducted in order to verify with certainty that there was no other safety threat on the school premise. Additionally, a walk of the entire perimeter of the school building was conducted. As a precautionary measure, all after school activities that had not already commenced were cancelled for the evening while the campus was swept.

In the next days, we will be taking proactive and precautionary safety measures, including additional law enforcement presence in the building and searches of every bag as students enter the building through our normal metal detector screening. These measures are not indicative of a heightened safety concern, but rather of a heightened vigilance of our already sound safety procedures.

We will also be making some changes to our school dismissal policy in which the exits from which students are permitted to leave the school building will be limited. These new dismissal procedures, as well as important student safety procedures will be reviewed by our administrative and security teams and will be shared with staff and students.

The safety of all of our students and staff is of the utmost importance, and we will continue to take every measure to ensure a safe school environment. We are grateful for the prompt and exceptional response of our school and law enforcement personnel in this particular situation, and also in the daily responsibilities of keeping our building safe. The expertise and leadership of all parties allowed for this situation to be quickly and safely addressed.

Thank you for the support you provide to our school and community, each of you are invaluable to our mission of building an exceptional school. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact the school office for assistance.

Sincerely,

Dan Gottron,
Principal Grades 11-12

Kim Price,
Principal Grades 9-10

Pat Hassler,
Dean of Students