


RANDOLPH TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
25 SCHOOL HOUSE ROAD, RANDOLPH, NJ 07869 (973) 361-0808

Jennifer A. Fano
Superintendent

jfano@rtnj.org
973-361-2405 (FAX)

September 6, 2017

Dear Randolph School Community:

The purpose of this letter is to follow up on my last statement regarding the events that transpired at Friday night's football game. Since my last communication, I have sought to gain additional details on the events of that evening. My goal was to fully understand what transpired and why, as well as to determine what we can learn from the matter so that we can improve upon our processes should such an unfortunate situation ever arise again. To do so, I met and/or spoke with the high school administration, our board attorney, our school physician, the chief of police and parents who reached out.

I have confirmed that the events in question began when an open container of beer fell, or was thrown, in front of the school personnel assigned to monitor this section of the bleachers. Staff members investigated and found open containers with alcohol in the student fan section of the home bleachers. Our head of security and administrators reported that the student fan section of bleachers, where the open container was found, also smelled very strongly of alcohol. In addition, several of the students seated in that section were visibly intoxicated. During the game, staff members were also provided with certain social media photos/videos showing our students consuming alcohol at a house party which started several hours before game-time. This disclosure was also provided to the police as it may have criminal elements.

With the body of evidence at hand and our need for student safety, the administrators followed Board Policy which prohibits the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on Board property. Moreover, regardless of where the alcohol was consumed, students are not permitted to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol on school property. Given the circumstances set forth above, the number of students who were seated in that section of the bleachers and the fact that the administrators were not able to unequivocally discern which students were under the influence and which students were not, they decided, out of an abundance of caution and student safety, to test all the students in that section of the bleachers. It is also noteworthy that after the students were escorted from the bleachers into the high school, additional containers of alcohol were found in the area. I am also told that as students gathered in the high school, the pervasive odor of alcohol was even more profound.

Student safety and security was the administrators' primary concern (as it always should be), coupled with the body of evidence found, compelled administrators to make the decision to test this group of students to ensure all returned home safely. Parents were called to take their child to a testing facility.

I fully support the administrators' actions in this regard. I also believe that they properly followed our policy on substance abuse. As of this notice, we await the results as they will go to parents who will forward them to the District.

I apologize to those well-behaved and respectful students who did not consume alcohol or illegal substances and were subjected to the disturbance and inconvenience of a screening at a hospital or other facility. I apologize to their parents as well. Our testing form requires a urinalysis, but I understand that many hospitals elected to take a blood sample instead. This is something that we are working to address going forward; however, I hope that in the end you can understand why we took the action that we did. Thankfully, everyone arrived home safely from the game, so I would rather be criticized for what we did, than what we did not do that evening. Per Board regulation anyone who tested negative will be reimbursed for their exam costs, co-pays, etc.

Some of the pressing issues I plan to address going forward, are: (1) improving the process for ensuring that drugs and alcoholic beverages are not brought onto our campus for athletic and other events; (2) a methodology for sending students to different facilities in the event we need to send a large group of students for testing so as to avoid overcrowding at any one particular location; (3) clearer direction to medical staff on the type of screening that we require (blood versus urine, etc.); (4) further training for our staff; and (5) a comprehensive review of our substance abuse policy and regulation for which community input is always welcome.

Teenage drug and alcohol abuse is a national epidemic and Randolph is certainly not exempt from the problem. I am hopeful that Friday's events will serve as an important learning experience for all of us – students, parents, teachers and administrators alike. I am also hopeful that what transpired on Friday evening was an anomaly in what is an otherwise outstanding school district. I wish everyone a safe and successful school year.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Fano
Superintendent

c: Alfred Z. Matos, Board President
Board of Education
High School Administration