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Principal's Newsletter

Somers High School



Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am happy to report that we have had a successful and smooth opening of school. Academics are in full swing and the SHS fall sports season is upon us. Go Spartans! In the last issue of the newsletter I highlighted some of the projects that took place over the summer and would now like to discuss a new endeavor that has recently been approved to move forward.

Last year we held a parent forum on the concerns of vaping in public schools. We also discussed school safety and how we can continue to make our facilities the safest possible in these trying times. A few issues emerged from these discussions. Students were concerned about not having access to all restrooms throughout the day. Parents were asking for assistance from the schools on how we can help their children steer clear from the vaping/drug concerns. Additionally, with all the security measures we have implemented over the past few years, students were still not wearing their ID badges in the building. These badges are important so that all staff can recognize those who should be here. Somers is a great community and the aforementioned are not necessarily huge issues in comparison to many larger school districts. However, we will always look for ways to be better than we are and be forward thinking on how to address the issues.

That being said, we are about to implement a new procedure that will make our school even safer for all students. Currently we have seven student accessible restrooms, excluding the PE locker rooms. All have vape detectors installed. These help but they are not perfect. Currently, we rotate restroom availability in order to curb unwanted activity. In about a month, each of the seven restrooms will have card a swipe mechanism installed. In order for students to gain access, they will need to swipe their ID card, thus requiring them to bring the cards with them to school. ID cards must be worn around the neck or attached to their clothing via a lanyard or clip. They should not be attaching the ID card to a book bag. All teachers will have cards in case a student forgets their card and

needs access. However, this should be the exception and not the rule. Replacement cards will be made available at a cost of \$2.00. Should a card fail to work, the student should come to the main office so that it can be reprogrammed. The student ID will work on all bathrooms thus not limiting restroom availability throughout the day. The swipe mechanisms will be turned off after school hours so that the public, athletes, and afterschool activity members can gain access without using an ID. Between this new system, vape detectors, and hallway cameras we hope to eradicate all unnecessary activity at SHS, thus providing a clean and safe environment for all of our students. Regardless of these changes, no system is perfect. Some will feel we have overstepped what is necessary while others will applaud the efforts. We are simply trying to do what we feel is best for everyone. I hope you will continue to support us.

And now for a few reminders: Please remember to drop your children off in the morning using the elementary loop. We want to keep the horseshoe lane in front of SHS clear for our busses (7:00-7:30). Additionally, please remember to leave a car gap length as you unload at the teaching parking lot so that staff members can turn in and park. Review the student handbook with your child. Use the Parent Portal often, but please remember that no single assignment paints the entire picture for the quarter.

In closing, we will continue to work diligently in order to improve services For our students and families. This newsletter is a monthly publication that is designed to keep you updated on the latest educational issues. In addition, I always maintain an open-door policy and am here to assist you. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any concerns. I am looking forward to working with each of you and in helping to make our school the best it can possibly be.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Cotzin
Principal
Somers High School



Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)

The rare mosquito transmitted EEE virus is now making headlines and become a topic of concern for many parents. I am hoping this little blurb can give some clarification and set some minds at ease. EEE is not a new disease; the first human case was discovered in Massachusetts in 1938. According to the CDC an average of 7 human cases of EEE are reported in the entire country annually. However this year numbers have been higher due possibly to a very wet spring, which resulted in a higher mosquito population. Twenty-eight Massachusetts communities are at “critical risk” of the virus currently with 4 cases reported so far this year and one resulting in death. 95% of people bitten by an infected mosquito will only get the mild form of the virus which results in mild flu-like symptoms, while about 5% will develop the more serious form of the virus which includes symptoms such as headache, a high fever, chills and vomiting. For some reason the virus effects people younger than 15 and older than 50 much more severely. Luckily it is fairly simple to protect ourselves and loved ones from mosquito bites. Remove any standing water around the house, avoid being outside past dusk, or wear long clothing and mosquito repellent if you will be out. Connecticut has only had 1 reported case of EEE in the past 10 years so do not be frightened by news stories, but please be safe while enjoying outdoor activities this fall and avoid mosquito bites as much as possible.

Spartan Sports

The fall sports season starts this week. All teams will be participating in their first games and meets. During this fall's initial construction phase of our new track and sports complex, our fall teams are adapting to the many facility changes affecting their practice and game sites. Our varsity boy's and girl's soccer teams will continue to be playing their home games on the high school main soccer field: please note that all fan access is limited to the right of the complex (near SES) or through the P&R back parking lot near the high school varsity softball field. Most all of our home JV soccer games will be at the MBA front soccer field. Our home field hockey games will be played at Field 7 at the P&R facility, while our home cross country meets will begin at the gazebo at the park. Our co-op football and girls swimming teams will start this week, with football home games at Stafford High School and home swimming meets at the Enfield Annex (the old Fermi High School). As the high school sports year starts, we are forming a new Class Act student advisory committee to promote good sportsmanship throughout our program while actively involving our student athletes both in our school and through-out in our league and state. Please follow all of our fall sports teams on the high school sports website which include links to all of the CIAC schedules.