

MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Administrative Unit #26
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May 15, 2017

Dear Merrimack High School Parents:

Throughout the state of New Hampshire and, indeed, across the nation, communities are experiencing an increase in the use of opioids and other drugs by adults and youth across all economic, social and generational lines. In order to address this issue in a meaningful way it makes sense to use all available tools at our disposal to ensure greater safety for our youth, in our schools, and, more broadly, in the greater community from which these substances emerge.

Toward that end, the School Board of the Merrimack School District, after extensive consideration of the topic based upon wide-ranging input from school and school district leaders, police, and the substance abuse prevention community, has authorized the introduction of drug sniffing dogs into Merrimack High School as one way to address this issue, as relates to the presence of drugs in the school. We feel that this is an additional step we can take to address this issue within the bounds of what we can control, and we embrace that responsibility. This is only part of the story, however. Inasmuch as the school and district seek ways to ensure a school environment that is safe and free from drugs, we recognize that the issue of substance misuse arises not within the schools but, rather, from within the greater community, of which the schools are but one part. The introduction of a drug sniffing dog can go a long way to ensuring a safer school environment, but does nothing to address the presence of substances in the community outside our schools which, as we all know, will make it much easier for these substances to find their way back into school without the help and active participation of a concerned and motivated community. Therefore, we encourage you to continue to talk to your students about substance misuse and to continue to monitor their activities, and in so doing partner with the schools to decrease the tolerance for the presence of these destructive substances in our community.

For obvious reasons we are not able to provide specific information concerning the timing of the K9 sweeps. However, please be advised of the following:

- The K9 drug sweep is scheduled to occur at any time before the end of this school year and MAY include a follow up sweep.
- During the sweep, as part of standard protocol, the high school will go into lockdown. The lockdown is a police requirement necessary to ensure student safety and a controlled environment while the police dogs are in the building. There will be a significant police presence for the duration of the event, likely to take upwards of 30 minutes. In the event that your student communicates with you about a police action and a lock down during this event, please recognize that this is standard procedure in such proceedings.
- The school district will provide real time information to high school parents during the sweep/lockdown, via school messenger, in an effort to allay concerns by providing appropriate and sanctioned communication.

If you have any questions or concerns about the upcoming K9 sweep please contact Principal Ken Johnson at Merrimack High School, 424-6204. Thank you in advance for your understanding of our intent to use every available tool to do our part to ensure that our students are able to learn and grow in safe and drug free schools.

Sincerely,



Mark McLaughlin

