

April 3, 2017

Dear Members of the School Committee,

As you now know Holliman Elementary School has been without a working fire alarm system since, to the best of our knowledge, at least February 24, 2017. There have been some inaccuracies in the news and social media about the timeline in which we as a faculty and staff were made aware of the severity of the situation. In the interest of full disclosure, we would like to inform you of the communication breakdown and lack of urgency that directly impacted the safety of the faculty, staff, students, and families that walk the halls of Holliman.

Our principal, Joseph Coffey, announced a problem with the fire alarm system on February 28, 2017. He informed us that fire drills would be announced over the PA system until further notice. That same day, he announced a fire drill. We did not hear anything more about the situation until Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> when some of the faculty and staff received calls through Connect Ed. to inform parents and some staff of both the situation and the current plan of action. Mr. Coffey then had a meeting on Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, to discuss the situation with faculty and staff.

One of our main concerns is that for one month we had no working fire alarm system and no plan of action in place at Holliman until a parent from Norwood approached administration and media. Is it believed that any member of our faculty and staff would have let this situation continue without inquiry? On Thursday, March 30, 2017, Ms. Lynn Dambruch went several classrooms and apologized for the lack of communication and asked if we had any concerns that needed to be addressed. Unlike Norwood School, we as the Holliman School community have had no contact with any administration from the Warwick Fire Department, director of maintenance of Warwick Public Schools, or even our superintendent, to explain and discuss the severity of the situation and/or the plan moving forward. A public document was posted on Friday, March 31, 2017, on the Warwick Public School Department website. The public has learned more than we have. Who is taking responsibility for our safety?

When Holliman School and Christopher Rhodes School merged due to consolidation about nine years ago, one of the immediate concerns was the vast majority of windows in classrooms did not open. Since then, and

previous to the merge, there have been written requests for window repairs. Which brings us to our next major concern: since the rescue window stickers were placed on our windows, we have consistently requested to have the rescue windows repaired, removed and/or replaced with a working, or partially working window, however nothing has been done about it. Administration continues to ask the School Committee for monies to improve athletics, from fields to batting cages, but they have not brought these issues of broken rescue windows or updating fire alarm systems to be approved. Now it matters.

Those who have said “brick doesn’t burn” or what’s the big deal clearly don’t have a child who was **knowingly** put in harm’s way. Those same people did not **unknowingly** go to work in an unsafe environment, where for all practical matters, an emergency could have taken place resulting in serious harm. When is the word of the teachers and staff who frequent the rooms and hallways daily in a school building going to be taken seriously? According to the Warwick Public Schools Strategic Plan 2013-2018, Appendix C: Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (it states in the **strength** column) that, “School environments are **safe**, civil & respectful of individual differences.” We have concerns. We hope someone will finally take a stand for the teachers, staff, students, and families of Warwick to ensure this statement becomes fact instead of fiction.

Sincerely,

The Faculty and Staff of Holliman Elementary School