

Thank you Mrs. Duncan and thank you ladies and gentlemen for allowing me to speak with you this evening concerning a recent report that appeared in the Asbury Park Press detailing the number of reported incidents of Violence Vandalism and Substance Abuse in Shore Area schools. It is gratifying to know that up and down the Jersey Shore the percentage of violent incidents, substance abuse, and acts of vandalism in our schools are in decline, and at a greater rate than our counterparts statewide. We all want safe and secure schools for our students, staff, and parents – the report in the Press is a comfort to us all.

Sadly, though, the statistics that appear in the state report show a 140% increase in the number of reported incidents in the Holmdel School District – with all but one incident occurring at the high school. In 2005-2006 school year, we reported 16 such incidents; that number rose to 36 in 2006-2007. I am not here to dispute those numbers – they are what they are, and we reported them. Rather, I would like to put those numbers into context, balancing them with what I also know to be true about Holmdel High School.

In analyzing the reported statistics - I think it is fair to say that turnover in the building administration at that time and our relative inexperience in filing reports such as these contributed to a large degree the spike we see in the numbers. I think when Mr. Petrizzo makes his state-mandated Violence and Vandalism report to the Board next month, you will be pleased to see that the number of reported incidents has dropped dramatically. Additionally, in the two years since these numbers were reported, leadership at the building level has stabilized, and valuable experience has been both gained and added. You can be sure that the numbers reported to you next month paint a much more accurate picture of Holmdel High School.

Nevertheless, while I am here to allay any concerns you may have about the meaning of these numbers, I am also keenly aware of my obligation to you all for establishing a safe and secure school environment, where learning can thrive – I believe we have done that. I bear the responsibility for establishing clear standards of procedure for the accurate and comprehensive reporting of data. The Holmdel community has every right to expect nothing less. To that end, I want to assure you that the building leadership has already begun a thorough review of our reporting practices, and will be taking advantage of further training opportunities available to us in this area.

As a building administration, as a school, and as a district, we have made tremendous strides in fostering a safe and secure environment for our students and staff since the time that these numbers were reported, and I would hate to see that progress tarnished. As principal, I take full responsibility for the reporting of these numbers, but I hope that you will also consider where we are now, and where we are headed. Thank you all very much for your kind consideration, and I wish you a very pleasant evening.