



August 2022

### **SRO At Each Building**

**ALC** Village PD of Maybrook

**Berea** Town of Montgomery PD

**EC** Town of Montgomery PD

**MES** Village PD of Montgomery

**VCHS** Town of Montgomery PD

**VCMS** Town of Montgomery PD

**WES** Village PD of Walden

*"If there is an incident in a Village after school hours that involves one of our students and the next day that same student starts acting out at school, a Village Police Officer would be able to connect the incident to the action, while a Town officer may not be aware of what took place. We wanted to give the closest police department first right of refusal, before taking up the Town on its offer. The only department that yielded their right to the Town of Montgomery PD was the Town of Newburgh PD. Therefore, the Town of Montgomery will provide SRO services to East Coldenham, although that school is in the Town of Newburgh."*  
*Michael Bellarosa stated.*



## **Bellarosa Makes Safety a Priority**

Michael Bellarosa, Interim Superintendent, met with the leaders of the three villages and Town of Montgomery and spoke with the Town of Newburgh to facilitate having an SRO assigned to each building. In the past the District has only had SRO's contracted for the Middle School and High School, with the Village of Montgomery voluntarily lending a police officer to MES when possible.

Now all seven buildings housing students will have contracted SRO's. In June, the Town of Montgomery Supervisor, Brian Maher, had volunteered to hire enough police officers to have the Town service all the buildings. While the offer was certainly appreciated, Bellarosa felt that the Village departments could bring a dimension to the role that would be beneficial.



## Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness

Responsibilities of the Director include, but are not limited to:

- Overseeing and coordinating the planning, development and implementation of a security program within the district
- Assisting in the investigation of all incidents on school property involving school personnel, students or the general public
- Plans, develops and implements security and emergency planning procedures in accordance with Federal, State and local regulatory requirements.
- Develops and coordinates appropriate workshops and training to keep the district current with changes in laws and regulations; acts as a liaison between all regulatory agencies, both local, state and federal.
- Assists in the recruitment, training and evaluation of subordinate security personnel.

## BOE Creates District-wide Director of Security

VCSD created a position for a District Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness. Under the direction of the Superintendent, this full-time administrator is an expert in disaster, security, and emergency planning for school sites and Central Office. The Director is responsible for the coordination, development and promotion of emergency service operations, with a key focus putting our students, faculty and staff and the public we serve at the center of all our policies, procedures and best practices. The Director will coordinate emergency management programs and activities associated with preparation for, response to, and recovery from natural or manmade disasters or emergencies.



### Ragni Appointed as Director of Safety/Emergency Preparedness

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# Safer Through Technology

Director of Technology Christopher Mohr reviewed measures that would be in place as school starts for the 2022-2023 school year at the August 22, 2022 Board of Education meeting. He referenced Alyssa's Law which was signed by Governor Hochul last Spring. In summary, the law requires school districts to consider "panic button" technology that would alert authorities to any safety threat at a school. He said that the District will have a speed dial on every phone that will connect immediately to key safety personnel. He gave examples that technology could be used to immediately alert a building through announcements or lights if there was a situation. Mr. Mohr also said there is a plan in place to provide all staff members with an app for their smartphones that could be activated in case of an emergency. Mr. Mohr explained that 911 can be called from any phone wired in any building whether they dial to access an outside line or not, and that 911 can now identify not only which building called but also the phone within the building that dialed the call. The PA Announcement system can be accessed by administrators directly from their desk phone which gives them immediate access to make any emergency announcements necessary.

Mr. Mohr explained to the BOE that these systems are in place or are being put in place with the Smart Schools Project. The card swipe system is in process. He explained future technology plans include installing exterior strobe lights on the buildings and physical panic buttons that would be hardwired and available at key locations.

Mr. Mohr explained that there are some technology based items that are still being considered. There is a system being evaluated that would run an immediate background check from a visitor's driver's license. A visitor badge would be created with the license photo printed on it. The visitor would be required to wear a lanyard that identifies them as a visitor and they would be required to return to the greeters desk to exit the building.

Mr. Mohr concluded by stating that Mr. Ragni has been part of all of the discussions and the two will continue to work together to bring these projects to successful completion.

## District Safety Plan

As required by state education law, the Valley Central School District maintains a [District Safety Plan](#). The plan is designed to prevent or minimize the effects of emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of school with local and county resources.

This plan is updated annually by the District Health and Safety Committee. Public comment is accepted for thirty days.

The [2022-2023 District Safety Plan is up for consideration currently](#). Public comment will be accepted through September 12, 2022.

The **District Health and Safety Committee** meets monthly. It is chaired by John Solimando, [john.solimando@vcsdny.org](mailto:john.solimando@vcsdny.org)

There is also a **District Safety Committee** that consists of district officials and local municipality officials that meets to review and update safety plans a few times a year.





## 2022-2023

### Board of Education

**Joseph Bond, Pres.**  
**Sarah Messing, VP**  
**Katie McKnight**  
**Diana Revoir**  
**Jane Samuelson**  
**Angela Terraloverra**

## Social Emotional Supports

The District employs many different supports for the social-emotional support of students.

### **YALE RULER:**

RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence:  
**Recognizing** emotions in oneself and others

**Understanding** the causes and consequences of emotions

**Labeling** emotions with a nuanced vocabulary

**Expressing** emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context

**Regulating** emotions with helpful strategies

### **Check and Connect**

Check and Connect is a program where students are paired with staff members who help to mentor them.

### **Life As Sport**

A program implemented through health and physical education program K-12 district-wide that incorporates life lessons.

### **VCSD Virtual Calming**

#### **Room**

A digital resource available on the website designed for students.

## Committing to Mental Health

Interim Superintendent Michael Bellarosa has made it clear that mental health issues are as important to address when considering school safety as are security issues. He advocated for a Social Emotional Support Specialist focusing on de-escalation and conflict resolution. The BOE agreed and created this Teacher-On-Special-Assignment (TOSA) position at the end of July. The duties of the position include, but are not limited to:

- Plan and implement de-escalation and conflict resolution programs with students district-wide
- Assist with student mediations district-wide
- Train staff on de-escalation and conflict resolution as well as other necessary trainings
- Be part of the the Building Equity, School Climate, and Safety Committees
- Work with the Director of Safety and Emergency Preparedness to plan Safety meetings
- Assist with safety drills and work on improving the same
- Participate in threat assessments district-wide
- Research and provide recommendations for mental health supports
- Develop community engagement programs and provide support to community outreach programs for “at-risk” students
- Work with administrators on discipline referrals and train them on restorative practices and trauma-informed approaches to discipline

## VCSD Hires Social Emotional Support Specialist

Nancy Fitzsimmons has been hired to serve as Social Emotional Support Specialist for VCSD. She has experience at the Department of Corrections and Community Service as a teacher in academic subjects and life experience. She also worked at the Office of Children and Family Services as an Administrator of Facility Services and Youth Counselor. She was their lead administrator for safety and security. She has also worked at St. John Bosco Child and Family Services and McQuade Children’s Services. Ms. Fitzsimmons is a NYS certified Special Education and Literacy teacher and holds her certification in School Leadership/Administration at both the building and district levels.

