



**Dr. Jessica Huizenga**  
Receiver/Superintendent

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Good Afternoon:

As you may have heard, the Southbridge Police in collaboration with the State Police and the Southbridge Public Schools conducted a shelter in place drill, and a subsequent drug sweep of the Middle/High School this morning around 8:15 am. I wanted to take a moment to address the rationale behind this action, and share our findings with the community. Upon my arrival on May 2, questions arose regarding the safety and well-being of the students and staff at our secondary campus. As a result, I had several subsequent meetings with the Chief of Police and his staff, our SRO, and conducted multiple visits to the Middle/HS. Following these meetings, and visits, we felt there was an opportunity, as is done in many communities, to ensure that the building is clean, and a plan is in place to ensure that the school is operating in a way that guarantees a safe and quality education.

Upon collaboration with Southbridge Police and other state agencies, it was found that there were no illegal substances in the high school. This is something to celebrate. During this initial drill, the dogs stayed in the hallways and away from the students. However, we will conduct more thorough searches in the future.

Across the state, drug use is on the rise amongst young people, and we are committed to doing everything we can to assure families and community members that our schools are healthy environments for teachers to teach and students to learn. To further address these issues, we have hired a Director of Social and Emotional Learning, and are working to develop even further, and expand our partnership with Harrington Hospital. We will be joining the Town Manager, Mr. Ron San Angelo in his efforts by participating in the newly formed Southbridge Substance Abuse Council. We will also be working with the administration, staff, and students to address the climate and culture issues between now and the end of the year.

Should you have any questions, or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at my office.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jessica Huizenga  
Receiver, Southbridge Public Schools