

Report a Problem – *Shhh!* - Here's How by Chris Neidenberg

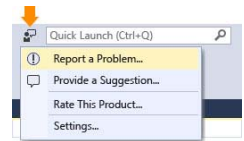
Parents and teachers wishing to report problems in the district for three areas can now dial a 24/7 toll-free number, [1-800-768-9780](tel:1-800-768-9780).

Board Secretary/Business Administrator **Regina Robinson** created the option in February, as perhaps a more accessible addition to the existing mode of communication: logging on to www.jcboe.org and clicking the link, "**Report A Problem**," on the top of the homepage. There, the new number and brief instructions can also be found.

Though Robinson originated this proposal, early discussion on possibly implementing such a system predated her arrival in 2017 - and even arose from teacher concerns.

It came in response to complaints from staff members regarding deplorable conditions at Whitney M. Young Jr. P.S. 15 that have since been abated.

In fact, then-Board Member **Gerald Lyons** originally floated the idea in reacting to those concerns. Lyons suggested employees and parents needed a way to instantly report facilities' problems in cutting through any bureaucracy, even anonymously if they felt the need.



Robinson explained during a recent caucus that the extra communication tool also looks to increase convenience for persons, including those not particularly Internet-savvy, to participate in reporting problems.

"It's just an enhanced mechanism for the citizens of Jersey City to report problems in the district," Robinson said, noting that parents made aware by their children of, or exposed to, "repair and maintenance (issues) at the school level," can instantly call the problem in.

The service means parents, perhaps upset with problems plaguing school transportation vehicles or personnel (such as a major delay), can quickly call while waiting with their child at a stop.

It also means that a teacher, possibly fearing reprisals from an unsympathetic boss perceived as ignoring a complaint over lax working conditions, can anonymously phone in.

While persons are requested to leave their name and number, so they can be called back, in a later email, district spokeswoman **Dr. Maryann Dickar** assured confidentiality is also offered.

"Anyone can report a problem with facilities, school food or transportation through the 800 number and they can remain anonymous," she wrote.

Board President **Sudhan Thomas** praised Robinson for implementing the tool, believing it could even be a more accessible way citizens can help the board keep tabs on what's going on in the district's roughly 40 schools.

Robinson told Thomas she had already spread the message to at least 30 parents attending a recent community meeting on district issues and received positive feedback. Thomas praised Robinson for using the forum in engaging with parents on the initiative.

"This is a very good resource because we're obviously putting up a dedicated (phone) line that can easily be reached," said Thomas.

He noted that while the online tool is helpful, leaving a simple message on the phone will be less time-consuming for some persons, including those without ready access to a PC.

Board Member **Mussab Ali** asked how the administration will log phone complaints into a database, similar to that set up online, and in ways trustees can personally review the call data.

"A report will (periodically) be sent to the entire board," Superintendent of Schools **Dr. Marcia Lyles** advised him. "We will generate a report based on the nature of the issues being reported."

Lyles said the relevant departments will also periodically be furnished complaint information for their review.