



Dr. Elliott Landon

Superintendent of Westport Public Schools

*Contacted by Jacqueline Abrams
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Elliott Landon was born in 1940 New York City. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Brooklyn College and a Masters and a Doctorate in Education from Columbia University. He has been Superintendent of Westport Public Schools since 1999.

What were you doing during the attack?

I was in my office.

How did you learn of the attack?

My wife called me to let me know. There was no television or radio in the office.

How did you react immediately?

Disbelief.

How did the attack impact your life?

I was made more aware of surroundings especially in crowded airports, theaters, terminals, etc.

Would your life be any different today if the attacks hadn't happened?

I would be less concerned about an attack on American soil or surrounding the nation.

Do you know anyone who was directly affected by the attacks?

Yes.

Do you remember the government's response to the attacks?

All bridges and tunnels were shut down, the President was hidden, the armed forces were everywhere, and a largely enhanced police presence.

The international community?

Shock and Dismay.

What did you think about terrorism before the attacks?

Concern, but confidence that a terror attack would not occur on American soil.

Did the attacks change your view on terrorism?

Yes. Terrorism became more of a reality.

Do you feel the same way today?

I believe we are still quite vulnerable to a terror attack on our nation.

How did you, as the superintendent guide the students, staff, and community?

Immediate action was taken especially for those whose parents were in the scene. All parents were communicated with so they were assured their children were protected from false information and unwanted information until they got home.

How did the district react?

An emergency plan was developed so if this were to happen again all administrators, staff, students, and emergency workers in the community would be prepared.

Did you receive phone calls from worried parents?

Some.

Were the schools shut down?

No.

Do you know how many students and or families were affected by the attacks?

All affected had relatives or friends who were in the vicinity of, or at the site of, the World Trade Center.

When you were made aware of the circumstances, did you contact administrators at the Westport schools?

Yes.

What were the conversations like?

Conversations were directed towards protecting the students and helping to relieve their anxiety. It was agreed to deal with the issue officially and address issues to protect students rather than frighten nor excite them unnecessarily.

What did you tell them to say to the students, if anything?

All staff were asked not to mention the disaster in elementary schools since the students had no access to the information. At Staples and our middle schools we mobilized our Pupil Personnel to address any reactions by students which might have had a negative affect on them.