



Jesse McCray

Grade Level Assistant

**Interviewed by Julia Turner
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Jesse McCray went to Western Connecticut where he received a B.S. degree in Social Science. He has won the Brian Blanchard Award for Academic and Athletic Excellence. He coached at Danbury High School for five years where he helped the Hatters with the 1990 FCIAC Title and runner-up spot in the LL State Championship. Coach McCray is now entering his 20th year of football at Staples where he is a Grade Level Assistant. In 2002, he was named the CHSCA Assistant Coach of the Year. He lives in West Haven with his wife Michele and their son Gabriel.

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

I had found out early that morning because there was a TV right in the front of the Assistant Principal's apartment and it was playing the news. I was in shock and right after I had found out I called my wife and made sure that she was OK.

Did you make an announcement to the student body? What did you say?

I did not make the announcement to the student body nor can I remember if the principal at that time made an announcement that day. I believe that she did after both towers had collapsed and later on that day when students were trying to call their parents.

Were the conversations that day more official or emotional?

I would say that the conversation between the students and parents were quite emotional. Everyone was quite distraught from what was happening all over the news and they were worried about me family members and friends who were suppose to be there that day.

How did the school react? Were the schools shut down? Do you know how many students and/or families were affected by the attacks?

The school reacted like how the entire country did: they were terrified. They were scared about their parents and siblings who worked in the city especially in the Twin Towers. It was a normal school day. The schools were not shut down because as far as they had known nobody had been

directly impacted until later. Students who were affected were graduates of Staples from previous years.

How did you, as one of the leaders of our school district, guide the students and the community?

As one of the grade level assistants, I did my best along with Mrs. Addicks to help keep the students in order. Students were going crazy because of the lack of communication and having many parents, siblings, and friends who were in the city on that day.

Once the information started to get passed around, the principal ordered the computers to be taken offline and the TV's to be shut down... why?

I am not completely sure why the computers and TV's were ordered to shut off but I believe it was because we didn't want to worry the students. About the time when the second tower hit I remember that the principal had ordered that Mr. Honeycutt turn off the TV in his room. She didn't want students worrying about their parents more than they already were.

Were any special policies enacted after the attack?

As far as I know, there were no special policies enacted after the attack. It was mostly after the school shootings that have happened in the last couple of years, schools locked doors and changed the glass on the windows so they were bulletproof.