

Morris Hills H.S.

Students May

Protest Today

By JAY BERGER

ROCKAWAY — Students at Morris Hills High School say they are organizing a walkout and sit-in demonstration today to protest the recent firing of 12 teachers by the regional board of education.

Students involved, who asked to remain anonymous, said last night they face school administration threats of retaliation if the walkout materializes.

John Kwiatowski, Morris Hills principal, said he learned of the plans last week and has been talking with student organizers attempting to squelch the movement. "As far as I know right now, they have called it off," he said last night.

The principal said he explained to the students that a demonstration would not bring the desired results.

Student sources explained they are protesting the firing of 12 teachers — which allegedly grew out of the controversy surrounding the new supervisors of instruction positions.

The students claim teachers opposing creation of the new positions are the ones the board chose to fire. None of the 12 were tenured.

Included is Robert Pohlman, an electronics teacher whose classroom was the site of a fatal accident last month.

Anthony Strano, vice president of the board, said the incident — when a student was accidentally electrocuted — has nothing to do with the teacher's non-retention.

Many of the teachers losing their jobs now hold certification that is temporary or emergency and their positions are being eliminated to save money, an administrative source said.

The student organizers say they fear the reduction in teacher staff will result in larger student population in classrooms.

Student petitions circulated this week urge the administration to reconsider its action and retain the 12 teachers.

"These (the fired teachers) are the people who really spend time with the kids," one organizer said. "I guess the board doesn't like teachers once they get too chummy with us."

The demonstration is scheduled to begin during a planned assembly featuring Gene Shepherd. Students are expected to attend the assembly in the school auditorium, then vacate their seats en masse, one organizer said.

Some students said they had been threatened by the administration, that participation in the demonstration would disqualify them from any future involvement in extra-curricular activities. "Some of the kids may back off at the last minute," one student conceded. "After all, how would you feel if the principal was standing there looking down at you telling you to get back to class?"