

# **Hampton Elementary School Office of the Superintendent**

## **Monthly Report to the Hampton Board of Education**

**3/24/21**

**Written: 3/18/21**

### **Seeing Through the Fog**

I have been trying to understand the current reality we are facing at HES based in the great news of the Covid vaccine distribution to our staff members as well as our substitutes and EastConn's bus drivers by the Northeast District Department of Health. The bus drivers were added because our vaccine distribution is a few weeks earlier than the EastConn distribution and our drivers have direct contact with our students, so we opted for the idea of the sooner the better.

Yet new problems arise almost daily.

What if someone on staff opts not to receive the vaccine and they are working directly with students? Do parents have a right to know if the adult working with their child has received the vaccine? Our answer is no. That was based on consultations with our attorney, the CDC guidelines as reviewed by Beverly Danielson through the weekly DPH webinars and our general internal discussions. The staff member's privacy rights are respected since this is really a medical decision on their part. The CDC's position is that we keep in place the mask, distance and hand washing protocols regardless of the staff member's vaccine status.

Then we faced the up coming vaccine's second injection's reported reactions that some people have experienced. With this in mind, I sent out a poll to all HES staff members requesting their guidance about how we should handle the issue. All of you have received a copy of the options proposed.

The poll revealed that a majority of our staff want to open HES on April 6, the day after they received their second vaccine; however, they chose to open on a delay of two hours to allow Sam to determine how many substitutes we may need to cover staff negatively impacted by their second vaccine with the option of closing school if we do not have enough adults in school to safely open.

These issues are only the most recent problems that HES has had to face and these problems reflect only two weeks down the road from the time I am writing this report. The "fog" that covers our short term future is getting thicker as we look into the midterm future - a future of a month out or two out towards the end of this academic year.

We have developed a budget, as was already reported to you, based on the assumption that the Covid restrictions will still be in place for the 2021-2022 academic year. Therefore, we have not changed our staffing. In the budget document dated 3/15/21 and entitled, "2021-2022 Business Coordinator's Summary", Sally has outlined the way we understood what our staffing requirements will be next year. The major change was the 2% increase you had requested. We now have two teachers who are in the new teacher TEAM process mandated by the CSDE. We have also included in this budget the required \$1.00/hour increase in all aspects of our pay scales. Because of the Covid issue, we have retained our current three bus transportation plan.

We have had the "fog" thicken to obscure our views of the Pre-K program. At this time, the non-official report is that the OEC will return to a modified grant application process; however, the grant funding will be returning to the pre-Covid slot system for awarding funding. Each child in our Pre-K program allows the program to receive a grant of \$6,000 for the occupied seats in our program. We currently have 16 slots or seats. If those seats are not filled, then each empty seat will not be funded. At this point, the "fog" really gets thick since we have no idea at this time how many three or four year old children are willing to attend our Pre-K class. And here is the rub, our costs keep going up for salaries, supplies, and food service with transportation costs at the current spending level with our three year contract: however, the cost of diesel is projected to be close to \$3.00/gallon in late 2021.

Since we have the Covid protocols in place for all of the cleaning services as well as the required mask, distance, and hand washing, and we have been very successful in having every child, every day, for our projected 183 day academic year, we now are facing a new problem, our distance learning students are slowly returning to HES. We have actually reached our full capacity based on the currently required 36 sq.ft of space for each child and adult in Teams A and B. We have also seen our "homeless" student population increase. In our case, our homeless students are students who are living in the home of a relative rather than in their family's home or apartment. Our counselor is very concerned about these new students. They bring very concerning SEL issues with them in addition

to the social and emotional issues generated by the pandemic that all of our students are facing. So the "fog" is very thick on how many students we will need to budget for in 2021-2022. Our best guess is we will have a student population of 85.

We have also made the decision, based on the newest CDC recommendation, starting on August 25th, the proposed first day of school, we will keep the mask protocol in place but the social distancing will be reduced, in our Teams, to 4' x 4' spacing for each child and each adult in each Team will have the current 6' of social distancing. With this reduction in spacing from 36 sq.ft. to 16 sq.ft. for students, we will have each TEAM's classroom capacity to add students. Here, the sun is beginning to shine through the fog...finally.

Our draft academic calendar for the 2021-2022 a year is being proposed to open on August 25 and have the traditional two days of August 23 and 24th as PD days as well as classroom set-up. We are also proposing to have only one PD day on November 12, a Friday, that will offer families an extended Veteran's Day which is celebrated on Thursday November 11. We have included the last day of school to be 6/7/22 for a year of 183 days. This proposed calendar has two days were HES and RD-11 have only one district open so only 1/2 of the Hampton students will ride the buses. For our calendar, the "fog" is lifting and we can see clearly what lies ahead.

Another bright aspect that we have in front of us is the recent information we received that the SuccessMaker software (that our students are using each day in math and ELA) will be coupled with the NWEA statewide academic testing of all students. This coupling of assessment tools will offer HES a very clear understanding of what our students have achieved over the time we have had to spend, since March, 16, 2020, in the Covid lockdown.

There is another bright spot emerging as the "fog" over Covid related costs is being addressed by the ESSER ii funding that was just approved. It looks like HES will be receiving about \$50,000+ in funding. We should have a very clear picture, at your April BoE meeting, of how our funding will be allocated. Our ESSER ii grant forms need to be completed and presented to the CSDE by April 19, 2021. We feel that there are three major areas that the vast majority of the ESSER ii funding will be used for and they are: Technology, ventilation, and a three-week summer experience to address the students who are needing both academic and SEL support. As was mentioned above, we have received a number of homeless students and their needs must also be addressed. The ESSER ii funding forms will be shared with the BoE as well as the certified staff for review. The goal is to have that review for you by 4/5 just before the 4/19 application submission date.

So my weather forecast for HES is:

Fog in the morning with a clearing sky late in the afternoon and the winds will be calm.

There are no major storm systems seen for the next seven ...