

Superintendent's Report
To the
Hampton Board of Education
April 28, 2021

Written 4/22/21

Progress Made

There is an old Chinese proverb that tells the power of small drops of water:

“Water drops combine into a mighty ocean”

Lau Ziu

That seems to reflect what is happening at HES. We have been experiencing the slow return of students back into our “in person” learning classrooms. This slow refilling of HES and our continued enforcement of all of the CDC protocols from the time students board our buses and walk into our classrooms and then return home seem to be directly connected. Parents have determined that we have been operating an educational program that is safe and effectively educating our students.

Our first goal was to lay out the plan clearly and in great detail to allow all parents to make their own determination as to what level of risk they were willing to allow their children to be exposed to as we reopened our school doors in late August of 2020. Parents could choose to allow their children to return to school in enlarged classrooms with all of the mask wearing, hand washing, social distancing, and sanitizing protocols in place every day. They could choose not to have their children return and we provided daily distance learning using Mr. Gervas’ on line media expertise coupled with him working directly with all of our certified teachers to provide the lessons each child needed. Finally, some chose to Homeschool their children and we provided any guidance they requested.

Our second goal was very simple:

“Every child, every day, for 183 days”

This second goal is being accomplished because Mrs. Danielson was here every minute of every day to monitor our implementation of the health protocols, answer parents’ questions, listen and report to the parents and staff all of the information from the CDC, Ct. Department of Public Health, the Northeast District of Department of Health, and the Connecticut State Department of Health, and to make critical decisions about how to best handle any possible Covid infections there were reported. She also worked to plan the distribution of our Covid Vaccination program for all staff serving our students - everyone from bus drivers to custodian, food service, paraprofessionals, certified teachers, and administrators.

There were times that people were concerned about how best to handle a specific student's possible infection. The administrative team would meet to review these specific critical issues. We always returned back to the CDC guidelines and protocols we had in place, and every time, Beverly helped us to make the correct decisions. That is how we are meeting our second goal. So far, we are 100%.

The third goal is to make sure that our Hampton community clearly understands the level of safety HES has provided our students, their families, our staff, and how we have effectively implemented our budget plan during the 2020-2021 budget year. We were and continue to tap every funding resource available to purchase all of the required PPE, hand sanitizer, soap, updating our HVAC system that is operating 24/7, and updating our technology. Mr. Nichols has kept on top of the building systems to make sure they are functioning at their top effectiveness. He has also sanitized every day during school hours all of the high touch points like drinking fountain handles, toilet and sink handles, and door knobs. He has delivered breakfasts and lunches to every team every day. He is also supervising all of the evening crews who are cleaning and sanitizing our school every evening. When there was a problem, he immediately called Helping Hands, LLC to ensure that the problem was resolved.

As superintendent, my personal hope is that we continue to provide a budget for the 2021-2022 budget year that will continue to fund these activities that have proven to be so critical during this very stressful time of Covid. We have, these past two budgeting cycles cut faculty by reorganizing the grade level teaching assignments from one teacher for each grade 1 to 6 into teams of one teacher for two grades. We have been able to organize our critical arts program in art, music, and health/PE into classes that have met all CDC requirements and then we assigned those same teachers during their open class times to work as co-teachers in the teams in order to work directly with each team leader to support our students needing individual support. We also combined four teaching positions in reading support, SRBI, media, and library into one teaching position that also included our distance learning position.

I am looking forward to keeping the health and safety of all our students and staff safe. I also know that there are huge funding pressures confronting the Town of Hampton. Two key issues that you reviewed were the three bus contract and the time our arts teachers are spending in teams when they are not assigned a class.

The first issue of buses seems simple if all you see are buses with empty seats. Two things to remember, our students are too short to actually sit in their seats and look outside. Secondly, we have no sidewalks in Hampton so each student needs to be picked up at their home, no matter what any of us may remember about our experiences catching the school bus. Yes, there are streets that buses cannot legal enter and exit safely and therefore each student must be at the bus pick-up point with an adult and each student will not be dropped off without an adult waiting. Finally, if we went to two buses from the current three, we would need to change the opening and closing time for HES, and then place all of students from age 3 to 11 on a bus ride of more than 85 minutes. All parents know what will happen if our youngest stay on a bus

for over an hour ... and in the Daylight Savings time, many of the students will get of their bus in the afternoon in the dark. There are, in my opinion, some effective budget cuts and some not so effective. Having a child have an “accident” on our bus and contaminating our bus seats, is not healthy.

Finally, you as members of the Board of Education, have approved a budget that I have presented to you with a very small increase. Thank you.