November 2021

Superintendent’s Report, Jeffrey S. Wihbey, Superintendent of Schools

**Message from the Superintendent**

Dear Board members,

I have concluded my entry visits to the schools this past week. The entry process is winding down a bit. I am moving forward with more interviews of staff and community members. My visits have led me to develop many hypothesis statements reflecting what I have learned from the HK community. During the month of November, I will continue to analyze my interactions and further develop these statements so that I can share them with the Board formally in December.

My interactions with the community continue to be positive and helpful. I have been impressed with how much community members care about growth of the school district.

I am going to begin to share and implement strategies that are now being made available for RSD 17 to cautiously begin to contemplate entering the “off ramp” of Covid protocols in our schools. I still do so with trepidation as I reference the post-holiday interval this time last year as infection and hospitalization metrics soared. We have certainly other mitigation strategies such as vaccinations now in place that can allow us to start moving more towards normalcy. I have high hopes that at some point during this current school year we may be able to move back to former levels of operational normalcy.

Sincerely,

Jeff

**Department Updates**

**Operations:**

* The Connecticut Department of Public Health released two new Covid related documents this past month which allow us to alter our operations towards a least restrictive environment for our staff and students.
* One document is an updated Addendum 7, *COVID-19 Considerations for Connecticut PreK–12 Arts Programs* which has allowed us to allow arts and music performances open to our parents. This had a positive impact allowing students and families to attend the high school dramatic performance of *Clue* this past weekend. It will also allow holiday concerts to be performed with parents invited in to watch.
* As of late Friday 11/5, all school districts received *Options for Temporary Relief from Student and Staff Quarantines due to COVID-19 Exposures in K-12 Schools Fall 2021* from DPH. This option has given us the opportunity to utilize *Screen and Stay* protocols which can greatly reduce false positive quarantines of both staff and students who have experienced close contacts.

**Schools:**

* HKHS won the Class SS State Championship Team Title in both boys and girls. This is quite unheard of to double like this, however, this is the third time HKHS Cross Country has doubled since 2015.
* HKHS Girls Volleyball earned the Shoreline Champions title this year.
* HKHS Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Volleyball, Individual Girls Swimmers all qualified for the State Tournament
* HKHS Drama presented their fall drama production, Clue, this last week - sold-out (limited) audience plus live streaming both nights
* HKHS Student Council hosted a Red Cross Blood Drive for students and staff last week. They collected 34 pints of blood (smashing the goal of 28 set by the Red Cross) which can help 102 patients in need
* We had 21 students inducted into the HKHS National Honor Society in October
* HKIS had a successful Fall Festival at in the afternoon of 10/29 with activities outside organized by the PTO.
* The KES new playground is finished and the students have been loving their time on it.  The community build went very smoothly and they finished in two days rather than the estimated three days. There were many parent as well as staff volunteers involved in the construction.

**Student Services:**

* The Department of Student Services is participating in a pilot offered by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) that will enable RSD 17 to monitor all students’ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) using the Aperture Assessment System.  On November 2nd, K-8 classroom/homeroom teachers completed a short 8 question online tool called the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) for each of their students. This tool asks how often a child has demonstrated specific social and emotional skills in the past month. On November 17th, high school students will complete self-ratings during their advisory period. Results will be shared with school teams to identify which students who are in need of additional SEL instruction and/or counseling support. We will administer the Aperture system two more times during this school year for progress monitoring. We are grateful to the CSDE for funding the training and providing free online access to the system.
* Starting last week, the Department of Student Services initiated access to Sparkler, a free developmental screening for students ages 0-5 provided by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.  Sparkler is a mobile app-based service with tools parents can use to track and monitor their child’s development. It also contains short videos with suggestions for play-based learning activities to support their child’s development.  The app is very easy to use, and most users find it fun and engaging.  To access Sparkler, families are encouraged to visit the district website and click on the Student Services page.

**Teaching & Learning:**

* Future section

**Talent Management:**

* Future section

**Strategic Planning:**

* Strategic planning survey links went out to all staff, parents, and students last week. Principals were asked to find dedicated time to allow students and staff to respond to the survey.

**New Education Laws:**

* Will update in December

**Fiscal:**

* Will update in December

**HK in the News**

<https://hk-now.com/hkhs-cross-country-boys-girls-win-state-championship/>