

## Superintendent's Report: August 2020

Highlight of the Month: I would like to extend a special 'thank you' to and recognition of the Eastford Elementary Reopening Committee: Carole McCombe, Mary Jo Chretien, Terry Cote, Catherine Roto, Lori Reynolds, Deborah Giovanni, Deb Richards, Lauren Barlow and Jennifer Norman. They voluntarily embraced the challenge of working on the development of a reopening plan that provides for the educational learning needs of our students within the health and safety requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### News and notes:

#### Facilities:

EMCOR has been working throughout the summer installing our new heating system throughout the building. Given this is a Town project, the completion of this project is an example of a very positive town-school collaborative effort. Although overshadowed by the planning for the pandemic, we are all very excited that we will be on a full hot water heating system when we return to heating our building this fall.

Our custodians, Dale Lundy and Chris Pittman, deserve special recognition as they work around the heating project to not only accomplish the routine summer tasks but also to prepare our schools to reopen in accordance with the health and safety guidelines of the pandemic.

We reviewed our ventilation system with EMCOR and the State and we have developed protocols based on their feedback. A copy of this review is attached to this report. Copies of the ventilation and disinfectant guidelines from the state were also shared with the custodial staff, who will be scheduled to watch these recorded videos.

### Collaboration and Communication:

Throughout the summer the administrative team has been in constant contact with each other, sharing the news and updates they receive from their respective professional organizations, attendance at legal seminars and participation in webinars specific to the opening of schools during the pandemic. Our nurse, Catherine Roto, has become a valuable resource to this team, giving of her time and expertise to share the information she receives from reading all correspondence and attending webinars provided by the various health organizations.

In collaboration with the EES Reopening Committee, we have developed the plan for reopening EES which was announced and sent to all families last week. A copy of this plan and the remote schedule is attached for your convenience. There is no perfect plan for the return to school during the pandemic. We believe this plan solidly addresses both the educational and health and safety guidelines associated with the pandemic. It allows us to provide for those students who choose to return to school and those who choose to temporarily remain at home. It is also designed to prepare students for a sudden return to complete remote, if health conditions warrant this. Of course, it needs to be emphasized that all plans are fluid and subject to change as we move through this pandemic. The administration will provide additional updates to the BOE and answer questions from the BOE regarding this plan at the meeting on Thursday.

We have attempted to remain in communication with staff and families to the extent possible. Members of the Reopening Committee shared information received at meetings with their respective groups. In collaboration with the Reopening Committee, two surveys have been distributed and analyzed. In July, a series of zoom meetings were held with families, and a mailbox to receive ongoing questions was established. The second set of family zoom meetings,

originally scheduled to be held last week, were re-scheduled to take place this week due to power outages. Additional meetings specific to families involved in grade level combinations will be held the week of August 17. Mrs. McCombe is also working with a committee to develop parent/guardian drop off and pick up protocols.

Mrs. Chretien, Mrs. McCombe and I maintain daily communication via email and/or conference calls. To the best of our ability we try to respond to emails from families and teachers within a 24-48 hour period. Of course, it goes without saying that our efforts at maintaining communication and providing updated information to all of our stakeholders would not have been possible without the “above and beyond” efforts of Ms. Gaylor and Mrs. Seguine.

#### Finance:

We continue to monitor our financial situation and contractual obligations in response to the evolving developments caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We do not have anything to report at this time in terms of financial impact on our current budget and transfers of funds. We are ordering the PPE we believe is needed for the safe opening of schools and are reviewing the additional positions we may need to safely reopen our schools, including bus monitors, extra custodial support, long term substitute support and additional nursing support. To date, we have received money through the terms of the CARES Act, ESSER funds, in the amount of \$8,900, which we plan to use to support the academic needs of our students. We have been told additional funds are forthcoming after the OPM meets this week.

In the midst of all of the COVID-19 communication from the State, we also received calls and emails of apology from the State Construction Office. Due to an error of communication among their staff members, we will not be receiving the grant for the amplification system. The project itself did not meet the requirements for grant funding. This was not picked up until the final review. They expressed a sincere concern for all the time and work we dedicated to the submission of this grant under the direct guidance of their staff and promised that this would never happen to a district again. Using the funds set aside in our 2019-20 budget, we were able to purchase 8 systems which address all of our current needs for the 2020-21 school year.

There are many provisions for additional COVID-19 related Family Leaves of Absence that may impact a need for additional staff. We have been in conversation with the certified and non-certified staff regarding the impact of the pandemic on working conditions during the 2020-21 school year. We have been working with the certified staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the 2020-21 school year and it is anticipated there will be a meeting with the non-certified staff representatives this week. I will update the BOE as to the outcomes of these meetings, including the possibility of a special BOE meeting prior to the opening of school.

The Executive Board is also engaged in negotiating the successor contract between the certified union and the BOE. A mediation date of September 28 has tentatively been set in the event a negotiated settlement is not achieved prior to that date. A non-meeting for the purpose of discussing the contract is scheduled to take place after the BOE meeting on Thursday.

#### Comments on the agenda items:

There are no specific notes on agenda items since they mostly involve status updates and policy reviews. Attached you will find the most recent enrollment numbers and the breakdown of the families opting to attend school or opt to receive instruction temporarily at home. We are still

working on the opening and closing times for students, including family drop off and pick up times and bus routes, and anticipate both being in place by our meeting on Thursday.

If you have any specific questions that you feel you need addressed at the BOE, please send them to me as soon as possible.