

## **Superintendent's Report**

### **October 19, 2020 Board of Education Meeting**

#### **Timeline- review and current state of the buildings**

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with the most up to date information about our School District. Currently, we are operating two academic programs. Our 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade Hybrid program ended on October 9<sup>th</sup> and as of October 13<sup>th</sup>, students who are not in the “all remote by choice program”, are in school five days a week. All desks and tables in each classroom, including pre-k, are equipped with a desk guard, masks are mandatory, and the distance between each student varies depending on the room size and the class size. Our in-school program students dismiss approximately 80 minutes earlier compared to last year's schedule. All teachers have their preparation period and lunch at the end of the day due to coverage (staffing) and maintaining cohorts, according to the Department of Health. We do have aides monitoring the halls, the bathrooms, and helping our teachers and students where needed. We have hired extra aides and are still exploring hiring more. There has been an ad on our website and we recently placed another ad on OLAS.

In our “all remote by choice program,” we currently have 282 students, 11 teachers (2 sections in K, 1st, 3rd, and 4<sup>th</sup>), 2 full time TA's (in grades 2 and 5), and aides as needed to provide accommodations. This “all remote by choice program” is currently operating on the JLC hours which are 8:15 to 2:45. On Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, a letter was sent out to all of our families, and in accordance with our re-entry plan, we are now offering our families an opportunity to change their child's program for the next trimester. The commitment to change programs would be for the entire trimester which ends on March 12, 2021. Just a reminder to all of our parents, this Friday (10/23/20) is the last day to make this change.

#### **Take Action Health Service**

As you are aware, we recently changed our Health Service program from the Frontline application to Take Action. The Take Action program asks a series of three questions which screens all students and staff prior to entering the building for COVID-19 symptoms. This program sends out the first email between the hours of 5:30 and 6:00 a.m., then continues to follow up with two more reminders in the form of a text and a phone call. We feel this program (which was not available when we opened school) is much more efficient, user friendly and easier for us to track anyone who has not checked their symptoms prior to entering the school or school bus. If anyone is not getting this message each morning, please notify your building principal.

## **Hours of Instruction**

There have been some questions and concerns regarding the 900 hours of required instruction which is part of the New York State guidelines and tied directly to state aid. New York State recognizes a variety of experiences when calculating those hours, including asynchronous and synchronous learning in addition to activities, projects, software, etc. Therefore, as a District, we are working towards maintaining the 900 hours following New York State and their definition by the end of the school year. We have also worked with our counsel to confirm this. For those Districts who, due to their specific teaching models are unable to complete the required hours, New York State has offered a waiver which went into effect last year (due to the pandemic).

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizx9-N38jsAhWvoHIEHagKB-QQFjAAegQIBhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fstateaid.nysed.gov%2Fattendance%2Fpdf\\_docs%2F2019-20%2520School%2520Year%2520180%2520Day%2520Closure%2520Guidance%2520FINAL.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0-cszYpGnO WC-1AfEEWJ](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwizx9-N38jsAhWvoHIEHagKB-QQFjAAegQIBhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fstateaid.nysed.gov%2Fattendance%2Fpdf_docs%2F2019-20%2520School%2520Year%2520180%2520Day%2520Closure%2520Guidance%2520FINAL.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0-cszYpGnO WC-1AfEEWJ)

## **Class Size**

When discussing class size, it varies depending on the program (“all in” or “all remote”). Currently, our class size for the students attending 5 days a week in school ranges between 13 to 23 (depending on grade). In our “all remote by choice program,” the class size ranges from 22 to 37. Once a remote class reaches 35 students, a full time TA is assigned to that class. If the class then reaches 40, that class would be split in to two sections, adding another teacher. Maintaining a balance in class size between both programs has been a challenge District-wide as we have had some of our families with extreme circumstances request program changes, and many new admits to the District. We watch these numbers regularly and will be adjusting these numbers accordingly on November 30th for the reorganization as necessary.

## **Professional Development/Technology**

Governor Cuomo’s clearance for schools to re-open on August 7th, provided guidance on how schools could re-open. Prior to this, it was difficult to determine whether schools would open, and if they would open what they would look like, and what we would need. As for the many preparations, Floral Park was reasonable and financially responsible as we made our decisions. Districts across New York State, and in fact across the nation, found themselves in a similar situation, thereby making it impossible to avoid some supply chain shortages in some unforeseen markets – including technology, PPE, and classroom structures to ensure student safety (polycarbonate dividers). The Floral

Park Bellerose School District was prepared. We have done quite a lot. We have ordered more laptops for teachers. All of our students, including our pre-k students, have iPads. Meanwhile, there are many other Districts grappling with back orders who have not been able to fulfill orders. All proper PPE was ordered, received, and distributed in plenty of time, classrooms and their furniture were analyzed and organized accordingly, and tents were erected outside. Our teachers, though familiar with District programs and apps, needed time to understand how these would be applied in each of their classrooms with their students. At this point, each of our teachers have questions specific to them. Eight technology coaches have been hired from our ranks who are working with teachers individually, as well as with groups. One of those coaches is directly assigned to our 11 remote teachers. They are well versed in our academic programs, platforms, apps, and general technology, and have been leaders in the preparation of our faculty as we all continue to pivot in our new educational environment. Additionally, professional development is being offered after school and on Election Day. These courses have been developed based on teachers' current knowledge and questions so that each one can take their next step individually. As we review and analyze our needs, we are happy to say that teachers are more comfortable and fluent with the technology necessary to teach our children. Sharon Meyer, our curriculum coordinator, and Dan Cunneely, our technology director, have teamed together to go class by class to address any questions teachers have regarding programs and technology. Our teachers have also started to explore and experiment with live streaming in the event it is needed in the future. Many people think it's just turning on a camera in the classroom; however, it is far more complicated than that. Therefore, we are taking thoughtful steps in preparing our staff for yet another teaching experience.

### **3-8 Testing**

According to the most current information to school districts, the grades 3-8 testing is still on as well as APPR, however, we anticipate more information to follow after the first of the year.

### **Free Lunch**

We are currently in the application process with the State to participate in the Free Breakfast and Lunch for All Students Program. This program has been extended for the entire 2020/21 school year. Once we have been approved, we will make an announcement, and your lunch accounts will be credited for all full meals that were already served. Any a la carte items will still need to be paid for which include: second lunches, bottled water, milk or juice (not with a meal), snacks, etc. Currently, we are working on updating lunch accounts. Due to the limited computer access we had at the

beginning of the year, we documented all transactions manually. We are now in the process of transferring into your accounts.

### **Adelphi Diversity Program**

We are proud to announce that we are partnering with Adelphi University, ten teachers and two administrators will be taking course work on their own time for credit. There are 8 sessions in total. The topics of their coursework includes: Confronting Implicit Bias and Microaggressions, Diversity and Cultural Competence, Gender Bias and Title IX, Safe Zone Training, The American Disabilities Act (ADA), White Privilege, Understanding Racism, and a final Capstone project. Participants must attend all sessions to receive the certification. We will acknowledge these teachers and staff members at a one of our board meetings in the spring.

### **Immunizations**

We are in the process of compiling all immunizations for students. We will complete this process and reach out to all non-compliant parents. Due to the COVID pandemic, NYS has granted a 30-day extension for parents to provide proof of immunizations. Parents of students who are not compliant will receive a letter informing them of the new deadline. Any student who is not compliant after the 30-day extension will be excluded from school until they receive any/all needed vaccinations.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

As of this date, we have had one COVID positive student and/or staff in the Floral Park-Bellerose School District. That includes FPBS, JLCS, and OLV schools. The Department of Health was contacted, and the positive student and their class were quarantined for the required 14 days. They returned to school on Tuesday. Several students in that class had gone for COVID testing and reported a negative result. We will continue to monitor all students and/or staff that report possible exposure and testing for COVID. When a student and/or staff report possible exposure or report COVID symptoms, they are referred to their physician for further evaluation. All are monitored by the health offices and when a negative result is received and/or physician clearance, they are permitted to return to their school building. With information provided by the school, contact tracing is done through the Department of Health.

### **Congratulations**

Tonight, on the agenda under Personnel, we have 13 teachers who have earned ongoing professional development credit both in District and out of District graduate programs. Some of these graduate program courses included courses on technology, literacy, administrative leadership, administrative intern courses and social/emotional. They are

to be commended on continuing to promote their professional growth and the goal of being lifelong learners.

### **Congratulations (tenure)**

I would also like to congratulate Marianna Antonakis, JLCS 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher on receiving tenure.

### **Thank Parents of Bus riders**

As you are aware, during our re-entry planning stages, we surveyed our parents to determine how many would be able to get their children to school without using the bus. The reason behind this was to allow for more social distancing on the bus. Around 85% of the parents who responded and whose children were eligible for transportation responded that they would not use the bus. I would like to thank those parents and ask that if possible, they continue moving forward as we now have all of our students in school every day.

### **Thank you-Lions Lend an Ear Foundation of Nassau and Suffolk,**

for the donation of over 75 clear masks. They even donated the Dawn for dishes to clean them, so they do not fog! More children's masks are on the way. Our community members who coordinated this are Helaine Vecchione, Terry Whalen, Debbie Meyfort and Helen Farley.

### **Transparency/ Flexibility and patience during COVID-19 and moving forward**

We will continue to update the FAQ, answer all emails, calls, take questions at Board meetings, whether written or hopefully in person when the Governor allows, work with all of our families and their unique circumstances and struggles, and provide a world class education for all our students. I want to especially thank our teachers, staff and administrators whose jobs literally changed overnight and have had to re-invent their profession by either changing their mode of delivering instruction, the grade levels they teach, in fact, their entire job description has changed substantially. I couldn't be more proud of the transformation that has taken place within our district in such a short period of time. Last year at this time, we were blissfully unaware of what the next twelve months would bring. On a dime, we were all called on to take care of our children in a whole new way, while simultaneously navigating a global pandemic experience that has shaken the fabric of society. Our District rose and continues to rise to the challenge, and because of the commitment to children and our community that I have witnessed since beginning my service to the FPBSD, I am confident that, come what may, we will not only get through it, but we will soar and our children will come out on top.

### **On a Personal Note**

I've just completed my first year as your Superintendent. In the past 30 years I've spent in education, this was and is by far, the most grueling and challenging that I have encountered. I also want to take a moment to thank this Board of Education and my administrative team. They have had to endure the task and repercussions of making hard and many times, unpopular decisions, and all the while stand by these decisions supporting us as administrators, teachers, and staff. We have all been directly and deeply impacted by Covid-19, and we do not have a definitive end date for the pandemic. While the phrase has been overused so much as to lose its impact, it remains true: these are unprecedented times. They are unprecedented not only in the intensity and brutality of what has taken place, but for the persistence in the impact that it has wrought on all of us. **As we move forward in this school year, one of our great parents sent this to me and I wanted to share it with all of you.** It speaks about the message that is shared at the beginning of each commercial flight (remember those?). During the safety announcements that the flight attendants make before takeoff, passengers are instructed on what to do in case of emergency. They point out the exits, where the life vests are and how to ensure that they are working. The information that we can, and really must apply to our lives in other ways, has to do with what happens if the cabin loses pressure. If the cabin loses pressure and it becomes necessary to use the oxygen masks, those who are traveling with small children are advised to first put the oxygen mask on themselves before tending to the children in their charge. The reason being, of course, that if the caretaker loses consciousness then how can they protect and care for the child? In times of turbulence such as these, those words are just as true for educators and parents. I would like to suggest that we all remember to take care of ourselves so that we might take better care of our children and community.

Thank you

Dr. Kathleen Sottile  
Superintendent