



HADDON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

Broadcast

April 2, 2021

Dear Staff, Parents, and Guardians,

As we enter into spring break, I would like to take an opportunity to update everyone on many of the recent happenings from around our district. Please have a Happy Easter, and I hope you spend some time with family and loved ones.

April 12th-Phase III Implementation

At this time, we are planning on moving forward with Phase III of our return to school plan **on Monday, April 12th**. Desks shields are being installed on every classroom desk, and students **will social distance a CDC recommended minimum of 3 feet with required masks while learning**. Students will be spread out to a 6 feet social distance at the elementary schools while eating lunch. The district is closely monitoring the recent uptick in COVID-19 positive cases. Should we need to adjust this timeline for combining the cohorts, you will be notified **by next Thursday, April 8th**. Please know that we are committed and hopeful to returning students to school in a more continuous and consistent in-school learning environment. To accomplish this, we are requesting strict adherence to New Jersey's travel advisory for over spring break and the **requirement to shift your child(ren) into remote learning if you travel outside of the NJ, PA, NY, DE, and CT areas**. Likewise, our community's collective commitment to taking universal precautions to protect your families from COVID-19 will directly impact the school district's ability to deliver on our educational goals for the final ten weeks of the school year. This has been a difficult year for many of us, and despite this, the **strength** and **sacrifice** of everyone have shown through since September. Please know that your efforts are appreciated and applauded.

Board of Education Meetings

Despite the pandemic, our Board of Education remains committed to maximizing community engagement and values your interest and participation in district surveys and monthly meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, April 15th, at 7 pm**. From this point forward, you will receive an email from my office on Monday afternoon the week of each meeting with the zoom link so you can have it easily accessible should you choose to listen in or participate. For planning purposes, **please also mark your calendars for the public hearing on our school district's budget on Thursday, May 6th**.

Focus Groups/Re-configuration Updates

Our community focus groups have been incredibly helpful in sharing community perspectives on many of the district's challenges, including the reconfiguration discussion that has been ongoing since the fall. At this month's Board of Education meeting, I will be presenting a plan to the board which has strong support from our focus groups. **The plan will go into effect pending board approval and has the potential to be as financially efficient as any of the other proposed plans without disrupting the neighborhood school model** or displacing current students from their existing school. Please see below a summary of what will be presented, and feel free to contact me with any questions.

"Dotted Line" Boundary Model (Tentative)

1. As students enter Kindergarten, they would be assigned to a school to continue their elementary years. This assignment will be based on enrollment at each school, home address, and proximity to schools.
2. Siblings will be guaranteed to be placed with their siblings proactively and with priority.
3. This plan will affect incoming Kindergarten students and any new students who enter the district in the future only. Current students will remain in existing schools, *except about 9 rising first graders at Edison who will need to transition to Strawbridge due to an enrollment of 32 and existing physical space for only 1 first grade section.*
4. I will propose that the district is divided into two zones for incoming kindergarten students:
 - **Zone 1**- Edison and Strawbridge would be part of the same zone, with solid lines designating a clear determination on a school assignment because of proximity to one school. Dotted lines would be assigned to the remaining other streets in the zone, and students with these addresses would be **assigned to either Edison or Strawbridge** and dependent on enrollment trends.
 - **Zone 2**- Jennings, Van Sciver, and Stoy would be part of the same zone with solid lines designating a clear determination on a school assignment because of proximity to one school. Dotted lines would be assigned to the remaining other streets in the zone, and students with these addresses would be **assigned to either Jennings, Vansciver, or Stoy** and dependent on enrollment trends. The district will provide transportation to the same areas of town as we do now, but busses will transport to more than 1 building.

Rationale

1. This plan can leverage recent federal and state funding and the "gift of time" in an attempt to successfully preserve and commit to our neighborhood school model, which is currently preferred by the majority of parents.
2. The dotted line model will use fewer physical classrooms district-wide, eventually paving the way for full-day Kindergarten in the future.

3. This plan is much more efficient than what we have now and can solve for balancing class sizes and providing equitable levels of instruction for all students regardless of their address.
4. It is the least disruptive to our community and provides a "rite of passage" for existing students and families.

Pre-School Extended Day Planning

We are very close to releasing information on a tentative pre-school extended day program for next year. At this point, we plan on offering 2-3 sections a full-day option for parents. The day's structure will include 2.5 hours of instructional component, a 1- hour lunch and recess routine, and a 2.5 pre-k club session (similar to K-Club). These segments of the day are currently planned for 8:30 am to 3 pm. Additional wrap-around child care will also be made available in the morning and afternoons on site. Details on exact times, locations, and price structures are being finalized and will be presented at the April 12th Board of Education Meeting.

Miscellaneous Updates

- All HT educators who desired to be vaccinated received appointments in March.
- Social-Emotional Learning and Character Education will be a priority for the next school year. The district has recently developed a character council of educators and will be evaluating **two programs** for **potential implementation** in grades Pre-k to 8 for 2021-2022. They are **Choose Love** <https://chooselovemovement.org/> and **Character Strong** <https://characterstrong.com/>
- When we return, the district will resume planning on some exciting and new summer programming options. A variety of topics and sessions are being developed, and we will release these details over the course of the next few weeks. We are currently in the process of determining staff availability.
- Coming soon for next year will be the implementation of a new website platform to maximize our communication effectiveness. The new platform will provide parents with easier access to the most up-to-date, detailed, and necessary information, so please stay tuned.

Have a great day, and thank you very much for your support.

Robert J. Fisicaro, Ed.D.
Superintendent