



# Superintendent's Column

## *School reopening maintains priorities despite challenges of Covid era*

**T**his past August, we held a district leadership retreat during which our shared decision-making teams in each school poured over our district Reopening Guide and worked together to ensure that it would result in effective daily practice for Covid-era learning. I started the meeting by making the claim that we would “successfully reopen our schools according to our four priorities of safety, equity, adaptability and compliance.” The evidence that I offered was a photo collage of our students, school staff, and families. In fact, we have reopened our schools successfully, and it is entirely because of the people of this amazing community. We still have a long way to go, but we have done very well so far.

I also want to emphasize the vital contributions of our Board of Education. Our Board President, Tom Flynn, Vice President, Cam Hall, Laura Heeter, Robbin List, Dave Yoviene, Michael McGarry and Rich Schneider have offered unwavering support, asked thoughtful questions, and have demonstrated much needed flexibility as we continue to adapt to the changing guidelines from state agencies and the challenges brought on by the virus, itself. I am writing this on Oct. 19th, which is the beginning of Board of Education Appreciation Week. Please thank our Board members for their leadership and partnership if you happen to see them around town.

The primary purpose of this column is to give the community an update on the ways in which we've committed to our four reopening priorities under difficult circumstances.

### ***Health and Safety***

The health and safety of our students and staff remains our primary area of focus every day. To date, there has not been a single documented case of school-related spread of Covid-19 in the Hamburg Schools, or anywhere else in Erie County, for that matter. Our students and our staff are faithfully following our distancing and masking requirements, and adapting to all of the new routines that the “new now” requires. We have purchased 22,500 facemasks, including two washable, cloth masks for every adult and child. We also bought 1,800 mask lanyards for our elementary school children. We have installed barriers in workspaces as needed, are following our cleaning protocols



**Michael Cornell**  
*Superintendent*

throughout the day, and have ample cleaning supplies in all classrooms.

We also continue to offer meals free of charge to students of families in need, including to hybrid students on their off-campus days and to those students in our 100% online program. Finally, our nursing staff continues to exercise great care and judgment in working with students and families as questions about symptoms arise. Our schools are clean and safe, helping our students and staff to stay healthy.

### ***Equity***

Obviously, our hybrid learning model and our 100% online learning model are new for everyone. I appreciate the fact that we are all working really hard to strike the right balance in both models, ensuring equity between on-campus/off-campus learning, as well as between synchronous and asynchronous learning. In particular, we are really proud of the ways in which we've provided outstanding learning opportunities in our 100% online learning program. As of today, 94 teachers are working to provide learning for the 364 students we serve in grades PK - 12. Fourteen of them are fully dedicated to the program. The other 80 teachers teach one, or two, secondary-level classes which allowed us to customize the program to the needs of our students. For this reason, we were able to accommodate

*(Please turn to page eight)*

**“ From cleaning protocols and mask wearing, to physical distancing and completing health checks, our employees, students, and families have met every challenge that Covid-era school has presented. ”**



Administration Building  
5305 Abbott Rd.  
Hamburg, N.Y. 14075

Published by the Board of Education  
Thomas F. Flynn III, Board President  
Michael Cornell, Superintendent  
Michele Darstein, Editor

Armor Elementary ..... 646-3350  
Boston Valley Elementary..... 646-3240  
Charlotte Avenue Elementary ..... 646-3370  
Union Pleasant Elementary..... 646-3280  
Hamburg Middle School..... 646-3250  
Hamburg High School ..... 646-3300  
General Information..... 646-3200

[hamburgschools.org](http://hamburgschools.org)

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Buffalo, NY  
Permit No. 1002

## **School reopening** *(Continued from page two)*

the same percentage of middle school and high school scheduling requests in our 100% online program as we did for our students in the hybrid model (more than 90% for both).

Importantly, our teachers have gone the extra mile to assure access to learning on off-campus learning days by creating nearly 1,500 Google Classrooms in the cloud for their students. To facilitate access, the district has purchased more than 300 iPads and 1,150 Chromebooks, so that children do not miss out on learning while off-campus for lack of a district-managed device. While the iPads have been delivered, we learned recently that the Chromebooks will not be delivered until December.

Finally, clubs and sports are underway, with most being available to students whose families have chosen to enroll their children in 100% online learning for the first semester.

### ***Adaptability***

Many of you have recently asked why we can't just have all of the students in school. At this time, New York State Education Department guidelines regarding student density, physical distancing and mask use preclude school districts from having all of our students attend school each day. So, we have been asked to adapt the school experience to meet these guidelines. However, rest assured that when school districts are allowed by the state to invite all students to attend school in-person each day, we will be ready to adapt to that right away.

Alternatively, we also need to be prepared if we are ordered

by the Governor to move to a fully off-campus learning plan because of rising infection rates. We have a detailed plan for this that we will share with families and students in the event that fully off-campus learning is required.

One of the key components to our ability to adapt is our partnership with Fisher Bus. They continue to work with us so that we can meet the needs of children and families while allowing the district to adhere to state-level mandates regarding density and physical distancing on each bus.

### ***Full Compliance***

Our team has been able to incorporate all of the guidance from the New York State Department of Health, New York State Education Department, Gov. Andrew Cuomo, New York State Public High School Athletic Association, and Erie County Department of Health to the letter, while remaining committed to our own Vision, Mission and Core Values that make for great learning in every classroom and in every after-school activity, every day. From cleaning protocols and mask wearing, to physical distancing and completing health checks, our employees, students, and families have met every challenge that Covid-era school has presented.

On behalf of all of us who work for the Hamburg Central School District, please know how fortunate we feel to be your partners in the learning and growth of the children of this community.

Stay safe and be well.