



# Superintendent's Column

## *School community resilient in face of Covid-19 challenge*

Albert Einstein said that “adversity introduces a man to himself”, and so it is that Covid-19 has introduced our community to ourselves over the past year. What I believe that our Covid-introduced introduction to ourselves has uncovered is a school community that has remained connected despite the requirement that we keep our distance, is willing to lend a hand to anyone in need, has been resilient in the face of great challenge and always focused on the needs of children because that is the essence of our mission. This reflection leaves me all the more grateful for the great people and partnerships that remain the bedrock of the Hamburg Schools.

The purpose of this *Focus* column is to provide you with important updates within the context of the three key areas of our reopening plan.

### **Instructional Services**

We continue to work really hard to blend in-person and off-campus instruction into a “bricks and clicks” model of learning for students so that we optimize student learning in each of our learning models. It is important to remember that we had been working to optimize student learning under the traditional school model for more than 100 years before March of 2020. Since that time, we have all learned a lot about helping children learn in the “new now” in which we’ve found ourselves since then. Our educators, families and students have all joined hands as partners under new and changing circumstances. An important development for our secondary students is the fact that so many of our middle school and high school teachers are exercising the option to provide synchronous learning for students when they are home on off-campus days. We are working closely with our teachers to assist them in effectively incorporating this tool into their regular routines.

Our skilled and dedicated educators are also continuing to strike the right balance between assignments, assessments and grading for students in grades PreK – 12 so that we are ensuring great learning every day, we are able to assess what students know and can do as a result of those learning opportunities, and to provide helpful feedback to students and families about how they’ve demonstrated their learning. As always, please continue to reach out to your child’s teachers when you feel that the dialogue will assist us in meeting your child’s learning needs.



**Michael Cornell**  
*Superintendent*

### **Social Emotional Learning**

We remain committed to ensuring that every child has a sense of belonging as an important element to our “whole person” approach to meeting the mental/physical/emotional health needs of our students and staff.

According to Daniel Coyle, in the *Culture Code*, safety is a key component to students feeling like that have a sense of belonging and connection to their school, school-based adults and classmates. When students feel this sense of belonging, they learn better, form more productive relationships with peers and adults, and feel safe sharing their feelings about what they are going through — both good and bad. Every adult who works in our schools knows the value of forging caring relationships with our students, precisely because we know that without a relationship there can be no learning.

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### **District Operations**

As you know from our Reopening Guide, the safety of our students and staff is our top priority. From masking protocols and physical distancing to Covid-19 testing and reporting, we have done everything we can to provide the safest possible environment for learning and work. As of today, our in-district Covid-19 testing program has not uncovered a single Covid-positive person, and the 7-day rolling average of positive cases from all testing programs remains at less than 0.5%. In short, because of our faithful adherence to all of the disease mitigation strategies, there is very little presence of Covid-19 in the Hamburg Schools. Rest assured that we will not let our guard down. You can count on us to press on with all that we are doing so that we can keep everyone safe and healthy.

We also continue providing meals for students in need on their off-campus days and remain committed to resolving issues related to internet connectivity and access to devices.

I started with Albert Einstein and I’ll close with Bob Marley. Bob Marley said that “you don’t know how strong you are until strong is your only choice.” Covid-19 has revealed the strength of our community, and being able to rely on the varied and considerable strengths of each other has gotten us through what seems to be the worst of this crisis. We know that there will be more difficulty ahead, but our collective strength will take us through to the other side.