

August 17, 2022

Dear SHRSD Families,

I am hoping you had an enjoyable summer and are excited about the upcoming school year. We look forward to welcoming back all of our students on Monday, August 29, 2022. Just a reminder that due to the referendum construction we are starting school before Labor Day this year and the last day of school will be on June 7, 2023. Here is a link for our district calendar for the 2022-2023 school year. [District Calendar](#) Below are a few highlights for the upcoming year that I wanted to share with you.

Referendum Update

We have been working hard over the summer finalizing our plans for the new district PreK-4 and 5-8 schools. The educational opportunities students will have access to with our new buildings and district reconfiguration is very exciting! If you are interested in viewing the latest designs, colors, etc. feel free to click on this link. [Referendum Updates](#). Our goal is to go out to bid for both projects in November 2022. This would allow us to break ground on the new 5-8 building in January 2023 with a completion date of July 2024. The renovation for the PreK-4 school would begin after the last day of school this year (June 7, 2023) with a completion date of June 2024. Students at the LPS school will be relocated to the St. John's School in Lambertville for the 2023-2024 school year. We will be sharing more details about this move later in the school year.

Mental Health Supports

One issue that we are all facing is the increase in mental health challenges our young people are experiencing. We have several new resources to continue supporting our students in this area. All of our staff who work with students ages 12-18 will be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid on August 24 and 25. This includes teachers, counselors, nurses, secretaries, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, administrators, coaches, etc. This is an extensive 8 hour training. We have also partnered with [First Children Services](#) who will be providing us a full-time mental health clinician to work with a caseload of students throughout the district. The clinician will be able to provide individual and family therapy, complete crisis assessments as well as act as a conduit to support and resources outside of the district.

For the first time, we will be administering benchmark assessments for social-emotional learning. Just like we track performance in areas such as language arts and math, we will now be doing the same for social-emotional learning using a new software program called [Satchel Pulse](#). This will allow us to track student needs and provide interventions to ensure all of our students are supported. Finally, we have started the training for our new Therapy Dog Program. Our goal is to eventually have a certified therapy dog in each of our schools on a daily basis. This is an extensive training program with many levels and will not be completed until May 2023. Check out our dogs in training (and staff members). [SHRSD Therapy Dog Program](#)

Safety and Security Update

As you are hopefully aware we did an extensive Safety and Security review for our district last year. As a result of this review we have many new things in place for the 2022-2023 school year. We have transitioned from the Class III Special Law Enforcement Officer to a Campus Safety Officer (CSO) model. Our Campus Safety Officers are all retired law enforcement officers. We

will have one at each of our schools. You will recognize our [Campus Safety Officers](#) by looking for the black shirts/jackets with CSO on the back. For more information on the Campus Safety Officer roles and responsibilities, click on this link. [P7446 School Security Program](#). Below are the names of our Campus Safety Officers. All three served as our Class III Special Law Enforcement Officers for the 2021-2022 school year so this was an easy transition.

Mr. Bartzak, West Amwell School
Mr. Dendis, Lambertville Public School
Mr. Malek, Middle/High School

We have also implemented the following for the 2022-2023 school year:

- Text messaging system for seniors in the event they are off campus during lunch and an emergency takes place.
- New threat assessment protocol and district-wide threat assessment team which will be responsible for analyzing any threat that is made.
- Added four electronic pin pads to doors at the Lambertville School (WAS already has pin pads on doors).
- AED signage in each of our buildings.
- Colored lanyards for staff, substitutes, and visitors so you can easily tell from a distance why someone is in a school building.
- Cameras are in the process of being installed on all of our school buses.

As a reminder, here is a guideline to follow in the event of a real emergency: [SHRSD: What Parents should do if there is a school emergency](#)

Special Education Program Review

Over the last two years we have done program reviews of our College Planning Process and ESL Program. This year we will be doing a review of our PreK-12 Special Education Program. We will be organizing parent focus groups in the coming weeks to participate in the review.

Grading Update

During the 2021-2022 school year, the district established a grading committee consisting of teachers, administrators and counselors. The goal of the committee was to examine our current middle/high school grading scale and make recommendations for changes. I am sharing with you a grading FAQ. Please review as there are changes being made to our grading scale for the 2022-2023 school year. These changes will only impact our incoming 7th, 8th and 9th grade students. [Grading Scale Parent FAQ](#)

Covid Update

The NJDOH released guidance on July 6, 2022 that recommended the following as we continue to transition from a pandemic to endemic: *“Universal case investigation and contact tracing are no longer recommended for COVID-19. Instead of contact tracing, schools can use broad-based notification to provide timely information to families, students, teachers, caregivers, or staff about potential exposure and the actions they should take to remain safe and reduce transmission. Schools should focus on clusters of cases, outbreaks, and evidence of ongoing transmission in school.”* Please click on this link to review our Covid-19 protocols for the 2022-2023 school year. [SHRSD Covid 19 Protocols 2022-2023](#)

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Suozzo
Superintendent of Schools
South Hunterdon Regional School District