

**Superintendent Report  
Region One Schools  
November 2020**

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**COVID-19 Uptick in Region One** - In October, Region One schools experienced its first cases of COVID-19 since the students have been present in school. To date, we have had positive cases as follows:

- Cornwall Consolidated School -1 (prior to the start of the school year for students)
- Lee H. Kellogg School - 1
- North Canaan Elementary School - 5
- Sharon Center School - 1

We followed the protocol described in the Region One Reopening Plan with slight modifications. While I did work together with the Torrington Area Health District and the Region One Medical Advisor as per our plan, it is no longer necessary to receive permission from the Connecticut State Department of Education to close school or to quarantine a cohort of students. Additionally, we were able to contact-trace and isolate cases within one day so there was no need to close school for the two to five days noted in the plan. Finally, for the schools that had to quarantine cohorts of students, we found it beneficial to meet with the entire faculty and staff, together with the Region one Medical Advisor to ensure that everyone understood the reason for the partial closure and to answer any questions from the staff. Thus, distance learning did not begin immediately on the day following the closing of the school, but the time spent with teachers on these initial cases was important.

**Snow Days or School Days?**

On Thursday last week, the CSDE issued a [memo](#) allowing all schools in Connecticut to count weather days as regular school days if the students engage in distance learning on those days. The administrative team and I have begun to discuss the protocol that we will follow to take advantage of this new option. While this should be a relatively easy shift for Region One schools to make, we have to consider possible issues such as power outages as well as the impact on families and students as a result of adding structure to these days. This [link](#) connects to a worksheet that provides data about weather-related closures and delays from 2014-2020. I will be sharing the weather-related school day protocol at the December BOE meetings.

**Support Services for Teachers and Staff**

Since the outset of the pandemic, those who work in the mental health profession have emphasized the need for emotional self-care due to the fear and anxiety caused by the pandemic. At the beginning of the year, Dr. Scott Fellows and Jill Pace provided teachers with self-care strategies during the week of professional learning (August 31- September 4) to promote emotional wellness. Since that time we have received a grant from Greenwoods Referral and Counseling Services, Inc, an organization in Lichfield that provides one-on-one counseling services by licensed clinicians. Betsy Maury, the Community Engagement Officer at The Berkshire Taconic Foundation (and HVRHS parent) worked with me and John Simoncelli, the Greenwoods Executive Director to make two hours of counseling available every Monday afternoon for teachers who want to use the service. BTF will fund this program as a pilot for six weeks. If the program is successful, we will discuss additional funding.

Other services being developed to support teachers in the coming weeks are as follows:

- After-school discussion groups led by Region One School Counselors and Nurses
- Mindfulness and meditation workshops provided by Region One staff and local organizations
- Self-care workshops provided during faculty meetings and/or professional learning time

We want to provide teachers and staff with as much support as possible during this stressful time.

### **Cultural Competence in Region One**

In October we resumed discussion with Dr. John Ramos, a consultant for Equity and Excellence Imperative, LLC. Dr. Ramos, who is also the Superintendent of the Watertown School District, helps schools review and improve their climate and culture with respect to cultural competence and inclusivity. We first met with Dr. Ramos last year to discuss the development of more inclusive recruiting and hiring strategies as part of a grant awarded to Region One by EdAdvance. When we met with him last year, Dr. Ramos suggested that while we were pursuing a more inclusive approach to staffing, we should also be discussing our attitudes regarding diversity and inclusivity as part of the Region One culture and climate to ensure that those who are members of minority groups truly feel as if they are an integral part of the Region One community.

Last spring, The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our work with Dr. Ramos. We resumed that work this month by organizing a diverse Region-wide group of 25 employees. The group discussed the strengths of Region One with respect to inclusivity and diversity as well as the areas where there are opportunities for improvement. Dr. Ramos will hold a similar discussion with HVRHS students on Wednesday, November 4. He will then prepare a proposal for a scope of work based on the input of those two meetings.

### **Human Resource Audit for The Central Office**

A [proposal](#) to conduct an audit of the Region One Human Resource function was presented at the ABC meeting on October 28th. The need for this proposal surfaced due to an increase in the amount of human resource-related work for the Central Office and related positions in the Region One schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The additional workload exacerbated pre-existing inefficiencies and gaps in expertise with regard to the human resource function, which has become increasingly more technical and regulated overtime. EdAdvance provides this service to many school districts in its RESC, who have spoken favorably of the benefits derived from an audit which include improved regulatory and legal compliance as well as greater efficiency with regard to work tasks. The audit is in no way a reflection of performance deficiency on the part of individuals in the Central Office and school-based staff, but rather a means for Region One to gain access to human resource professionals who are experts in the field, something that we lack in Region One. This [link](#) provides notes to support the rationale for the proposal.

### **Administrator Evaluation -2020-2021**

Now that the basis for 2020-2021 teacher goals have been set, I will be working with administrators to set their goals for the year. Goals will be aligned with the teacher goals which focus on ensuring student engagement during the learning process. Administrators will use data gathered from staff, students and parents/caregivers in combination with student achievement data to assess the effectiveness of instruction and student learning.

## **Ventilation**

The colder weather is causing teachers to have to close their windows, which was helping to ameliorate the ventilation in many of the classrooms in Region One. Therefore, administrators and custodial staff are currently making plans to purchase air purifiers. Sam is providing information with regard to cost and effectiveness of various machines. Coronavirus Relief Fund money may be used for these purchases.

## **The One Eleven Group Update**

The One Eleven team continue to work on the Region One projects as follows:

- The Umbrella Project - This work focuses on raising awareness of the northwest corner as a place to live, work and attend our top notch schools. Currently the umbrella group includes the Region 6 school district, the Litchfield school district and the Region One school district. The deliverables that will be ready to launch by Thanksgiving include:
  - Selection of a logo (completed)
  - Development of campaigns (themes) (completed)
  - landing pages (Completed design phase)
  - Links to each regional/district website and the school sites within each region (completed design phase)

Social media support and press releases will follow the site launch to promote public awareness.

- The Region One Project - This work is linked to the Umbrella project and focuses on providing the Central Office with a more contemporary image as well as greater visibility on the internet. Deliverables by Thanksgiving will include:
  - Selection of a logo (completed)
  - Development of campaign themes (completed)
  - landing pages (design phase done)
  - Public relations to promote public awareness

I will share the results of this work at the December BOE meetings and discuss plans for next steps.

## **Food Service Update**

All schools are managing the expanded provision of food service as per the CSDE and USDA allowance for the remainder of this calendar year. The biggest increase in demand for breakfast and lunch has occurred in Salisbury and the staff there is working to adjust to the increased demand. The demand at all other schools in the Region has not been as great and there are no issues reported in serving families as needed.

## **Jill Pace in the News!**

Last month a reporter at WMAR2, the ABC channel in Baltimore, MD contacted Jill Pace to ask her about the Region One experience with the Johns Hopkins workshops regarding the science of COVID-19. This [link](#) connects to the broadcast which includes Jill's comments as well as an explanation of the program. It is a nice recognition for Region One. Thank you Jill!

## **The First Region One Quarterly Newsletter for 2020-2021**

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the first [newsletter](#) of the school year. Nancy Hegy-Martin did a masterful job of designing the covers (front and back) and the layout. You can see from the stories, how proud everyone is of how we are managing through difficult times. Finally, we are able to celebrate the community organizations that have supported our schools and our students. The newsletter sheds a ray of bright light when days are becoming shorter and the news is not always positive.