



Yorktown Central School District



Dr. Ronald Hattar
Superintendent of Schools

2725 Crompond Road
Yorktown Heights, New York 10598
(914) 243-8001
(914) 243-8003 (fax)

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Dear Yorktown School Community,

I hope you and your family are staying well. After this prolonged closure, all seven days of the week seem to blend together; however, I am hoping that you find the opportunity to enjoy some time away from the demands of this newly defined routine. Our team has been hard at work at so many different aspects of the operations of our school district. On a typical day, there are many variables that demand our close attention in our schools. With thousands of students, nearly 500 staff, hundreds of reporting requirements and mandates from state and federal agencies, dozens of contractors, and the fiscal management of taxpayer monies, the demands on time are extraordinary. With the closing of schools, the considerations have understandably changed and increased. Most certainly, some matters have been eliminated--such as investigating conduct on school buses. However, other considerations have filled the void such as questions regarding the continued operations of our transportation contractor so we may understand the options before us to transport students safely. My purpose in writing to you today is to share the most updated information with our school community.

Grading

In the middle and high schools, we will be on a pass/fail system for the 4th quarter. The pass/fail system will be based upon the assignments submitted and the extent/accuracy to which assignments were completed. The extent of the child's participation in remote learning, either synchronously or asynchronously, will be considered as well. Students will not be penalized in their GPA for their 4th quarter grade in light of the myriad situations facing hundreds within our school community.

Computing final averages will largely be based on the 28 weeks when schools were physically in session. The actual allocation of the final calculation will be shared in the coming days.

At the K-5 level, we recognize that the completion of assignments in a remote learning environment is largely a function of support received at home. With the myriad and diverse circumstances facing families in our schools, third trimester report cards will not be formally issued. Rather students will have been deemed to have completed the expectations of remote learning either satisfactorily or incompletely/unsatisfactorily.

Budget Vote and Trustee Election

By Governor's executive order, the annual budget vote and trustee election is being held through a 100% absentee ballot format. There are no physical polling locations for school elections this year across New York State. We are still working through the mechanics of the Governor's order as it requires our district to create an additional hard-copy mailing to approximately 7,100 homes and generate absentee ballots for approximately 15,000 registered voters with return postage included. We are hard at work mobilizing the necessary resources to enact this mandate, and we will communicate more information once available. We do know that absentee ballots must be received at the Central Administration Building no later than June 9th at 5p.m. Ballots may be mailed to the Central Administration Building, using the included postage paid envelope, at 2725 Crompond Road on the Yorktown High School Campus.

With regard to the budget, there are many wonderful things happening in our schools and the community's support of our budget has been paramount to ensuring our continued progress. The accomplishments of our district are vast, and they have been shared extensively with our community. We educate the whole child and we do so at an exemplary level by offering myriad academic, athletic, arts, co-curricular, and service opportunities for our students. Needless to say, our students have excelled in these areas, and while this pandemic has been a very somber experience, it is appropriate to reflect on the enormous success that our district has experienced in the last year alone. While being a National School District of Character and having two schools recognized as National Schools of Character, Yorktown High School has had an especially extraordinary last 12 months.

Yorktown High School has been recognized as:

- ❖ 2019 National Blue Ribbon School for Academic Excellence;
- ❖ 2019 New York State Education Department Reward School for Academic Excellence;
- ❖ 2019 Newsweek Top STEM Schools in America;
- ❖ 2020 (#526 in USA) US News and World Report America's Best High School (improved 109 spots from 2019; and
- ❖ Top 3% Academically of High Schools in America (US News and World Report 2020).

Successfully developing the school budget is an extremely important consideration for the District. It is always a thoughtful process that requires careful analysis and consideration. At the forefront of this

process are our wonderful students. We have more than 3,400 students who attend school in the Yorktown Central School District each day, and we take great pride in strategically crafting a budget that meets the needs of our students while being respectful of our taxpayers. We believe that the 2020-21 budget successfully achieves that balance.

This budget maintains class sizes at, or below, Board of Education guidelines and keeps district programs offered to students intact. The 2020-21 also reflects measures the District will be required to take to reopen in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include required personal protective equipment for students and staff, facility modifications to comply with imposed social distancing requirements, and academic support programs for students beginning as early as this summer. We are also accounting for projected increased enrollment in the elementary grades. The growth has largely been a result of new families moving to our community and more students choosing to return to our schools from private schools. In the last five years, 33% of students attending private schools have returned to our excellent district. The 2020-21 budget will also provide for our continued support of social and emotional learning and character education while also expanding high school course offerings to include a second Engineering course.

Our other imperative during the budget development process, as always, is to be respectful of our taxpayers. The budget is fully compliant with the tax levy cap and is amongst the lowest increase in the region. This results in a tax rate increase in Yorktown estimated at 1.15%, a tax rate decrease in New Castle estimated at - 3.33%, and a tax rate increase in Cortlandt estimated at 1.98%.

In sum, we believe this budget reflects an appropriate balance between providing our students with the well-rounded education that they deserve and maintaining a genuine sensitivity to taxpayers. We thank the Board and our administrative team for their tireless effort in putting forth a budget that puts our students first while also demonstrating a genuine respect for taxpayers.

With this year's budget vote taking place through the absentee ballot system, I truly hope that you will exercise this important civic duty so that our school district may continue to serve our children and community to the greatest level.

Graduation and Moving-Up Ceremonies.

Plans for the end of year celebrations are coming together all across the District. We are in the midst of very challenging circumstances and governmental orders that provide us limited options to structure these events; however, in spite of these circumstances, our school leadership teams have developed ceremonies that will celebrate our students and their accomplishments. The plans for K-8 will be

finalized by early June and the plans for the YHS Class of 2020 will be shared during an upcoming virtual video conference on Thursday, May 21st at 7 pm. The link for this meeting will follow.

Summer Programs

We are still awaiting directives from the Governor and State Education Department as to whether we will be permitted to offer summer programming and facility use. We are hoping to offer a summer virtual learning skills practice programs, in mathematics and English language arts, at the elementary and middle grades.

School Facilities

As some private and public facilities across the state begin to reopen, school districts will experience a natural delay as we await guidance from the NYS Education Department, the Governor's Office, and other regulatory entities.

Food Donations

We will be sponsoring two very special collections for Yorktown families in need.

The first is a non-perishable food collection outside of the main entrance of Yorktown High School. You are welcome to bring non-perishable food items and leave them at the main entrance of Yorktown High School anytime between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. The items will be donated to two food pantries in town to help replenish their supply. We kindly ask that you comply with all local social distancing and mask requirements while on campus.

The second effort is to support the terrific local businesses in town and Yorktown families in need. The local businesses in town would benefit from our assistance and families in need would benefit from the same assistance. More information on this effort will follow in a subsequent letter.

YouTube and Public Access Channel

I encourage you to visit our YouTube and public access channels. In the coming days, we will be posting the most recent Board of Education meetings so the community may not only see the budget presentations that have been provided, but to also hear the discussion and context around the presentations.

We will also be posting some classic and memorable athletic contests from the past as well as some of the terrific performing arts performances from the past.

Our YouTube channel can be accessed by visiting:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCS54FE90teRUJs6EIsOUt7Q/playlists?pbjreload=10>

Content will be posted to our public access channels in just over a week's time. You may tune to Verizon Fios channel 27 or Cablevision Channel 18 to access the programming in the coming week.

In closing, I wish you and your family good health during this very challenging time. As always, thank you for your continued support of our excellent school district. Enjoy this beautiful day!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Hattar", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ron Hattar