

A View from the Principal's Office

October 16, 2020

What a start to the 2020 – 2021 school year! I hope that you are all well and I want to share just a few thoughts with you. Earlier in the week, Vermont's Commissioner of Health, Mark Levine, reminded us that there have been no cases of the COVID-19 virus transmitted in schools; he further stated that all cases involving school children were transmitted elsewhere, not at school (VT Digger). This message affirms our absolute need to maintain vigilance regarding the wearing of masks, maintaining physical distance, and washing / sanitizing our hands. I remind our students daily that these three simple things have proven to provide layers of protection and that complacency will likely result in an increase in cases. It is human nature to become complacent. The vast majority of our students continue to be inspirational in their adherence to these expectations. As Vermonters, we know that colder, wetter weather is coming, we could not have asked for a better fall to start this school year. Our students have had the opportunity to be outside in beautiful weather almost every day since we started. Our tents and chairs have supported learning opportunities for our students. As we move inside, our precautions will be even more important.

I am proud of all that our school has been able to accomplish in the first few weeks and am mindful that we still have much work to do. We have figured out how to host events on campus; including both an SAT and PSAT. Our athletic department has created a collection of tight protocols that have ensured that Hartford High School IS following state guidelines and, as a result, our athletic teams are playing games with fans in the stands. We have found ways to make music and move forward with our musical preparation while adhering to all of the state's expectations. We believe that we have put in place a flexible schedule that allows for student success.

We are also mindful that many of our students continue to struggle as remote learners and our plan puts all students in that position weekly. I want you to know that we continue to consider ways to support all learners, including those who are struggling. The old adage: *if you continue*

to do the things you are doing, you will continue to get the things that you got, rings true. We need to explore some alternatives to ensure that we are truly able to partner with all learners.

I also want to make it very clear that, if we are to continue to be a safe place for our students and all those they come in contact with, we need your partnership. If your child travels to a place that is Yellow or Red on VT's map, for non-essential purposes, they must quarantine upon return. As you may have seen, a number of cases in Vermont and New Hampshire have come from athletic travel teams. You must understand the expectations outlined above as you make family decisions about supporting non-essential travel. I know that this is inconvenient and requires sacrifices, now more than ever it is important that we understand the unique connectedness that exists in our community; simply stated, your actions do affect others.

Our homes and school are closer to New Hampshire than most of Vermont. Our travel back and forth over the river is done without much thought. This week Grafton County, New Hampshire, which includes Hanover, Lebanon, and West Lebanon, became one of those places we cannot travel to for non-essential activities without quarantining upon return. We know that essential travel, which includes most of the travel that allows us to address our needs, is allowed without the need to quarantine upon return. I fully expect that this will present a challenge to our students and their families. Please model for your children that you are willing to make the sacrifices inherent in keeping everyone safe and limit your travel to any of these communities to essential travel only.

Vermonters have done a remarkable job thus far managing the COVID-19 impact on our communities. Schools have not been places of transmission, our students daily do the things that we expect them to do. We need to fight our complacent tendencies and prepare to go into the late fall and winter season more vigilant, not less. I know that our young people are watching us; they are looking for guidance, example, and assurance from the adults in their life that we are willing to make the same sacrifices that we are requiring of them as we partner in keeping everyone safe.

Thanks for reading,

Nelson Fogg, Principal
Hartford High School
(802) 295-8610 x *2190
foggn@hartfordschools.net