



An informational update from the Superintendent to the RSD 17 Board.

October 2023

Superintendent's Report, Jeffrey S. Wihbey, Superintendent of Schools



Message from the Superintendent

HK is excited to report that our first two HKHS students will start their internships at Masonic Healthcare and Madison Motors this Fall. We would like to thank our local CT community for allowing our students to come and learn on a hands-on basis.

RSD 17 is pleased to announce that HK Youth and Family Services is coordinating an HK Mentoring Program at BES, KES, and HKIMS this year. [link](#)

Department Updates

Transportation

- STA is down seven drivers, causing some buses to run later than usual.
- STA has adjusted some routes and changed pickup times to help with some of the timing issues.
- There have been two incidents in the last two weeks where the Swing Bridge abruptly closed around 4:00 for a marine vessel, which caused backups in 154 and exit 7, causing delays. The most recent update from 9/29 shows the schedule. If the bridge is open to let a tall marine vessel at 4:00, then it will continue to cause these delays:
 - Marine Advisory:
The swing bridge openings for tall marine vessels are scheduled as follows:
 - Monday through Thursday at 10 am, 1 pm, and 4 pm
 - Friday through Sunday at 10 am, 1 pm, 4 pm, and 6 pm

Facilities

- The new boiler was installed at KES and was put into operation on September 25th.
- A Geese deterrent system was installed for all playing fields at the High School.
- A flagpole light was installed to illuminate the flag at BES.

Technology

- Chromebooks were distributed to the district.



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Food Services

- Food Services welcomes two new employees for the new school year, Emily Healey at BES and Cheryl Casey as a substitute.
- Mary Hueg, Headcook at HKIMS, will be recognized at the School Nutrition Conference in October as she was chosen as A Rising Star Manager.

Fiscal

- Preliminary preparations for the FY 24-25 budget cycle have begun.
- Transition to LEARN performing many of our back-office functions (payroll, AP) remains on track.
- Work remained on track for our annual Federal Audit.

Talent, Accountability, & Human Resources

- A Flu Clinic was held on 9/29/23 in collaboration with the District. Forty-five staff members received their shot!
- A second vaccine clinic is planned for Friday, 10/20. Nutmeg Pharmacy will be onsite to offer flu and COVID vaccinations.
- The online platform for evaluations was launched. All staff were assigned their specific evaluation type, and evaluation rights were given to supervisors. We are excited to introduce this efficiency to the district.
- The October [Central Office Newsletter](#) was shared with all staff.

Student Services

- Student Services staff engaged with Data Teams to review assessment information, discuss strategies, and collaborate with general education staff.

Curriculum Office

- The district rolled out an attendance monitoring tool within PowerSchool that will help leaders and support staff track, monitor, and intervene in student absenteeism.
- A series of beginning teacher support sessions started in late September. The district offers these sessions as support for beginning teachers and are offered six times per year. Topics include TEAM overview, preparing for parent conferences and communicating with families, attending PPTs and 504 meetings, time management, digital citizenship, student discipline, assessment, and self-care.
- Data teams began on 9/22 at all levels and in all schools. Teams planned their focus areas for the year and looked at initial fall data.

Schools



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HKHS

- Congratulations to Athletic Director Flint, who has received the 2023 National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association State Award of Merit. The award is presented annually in each state to a NIAAA member who demonstrates outstanding leadership and meritorious service and achievement in the vocation of interscholastic administration.
- HK will host our first pep rally since COVID-19 this year as part of Homecoming Week! The rally focuses on celebrating all students - for athletics, drama, class competitions, and even a cheerleader/teacher dance feature ala TikTok.
- The Co-Curricular Fair happened on September 27th, when students visited “stations” for each of our 30+ clubs to choose one (or many!) of interest. About 85% of our student population is engaged in clubs and activities, which is always a popular event.
- Our NEASC Two-Year report was due on October 1st. In this report, the high school team must update the Commission on our progress with respect to the recommendations made during the Decennial visit. Essentially, all major needs identified in the report have been addressed, except for the physical plant issues, which are more extensive and are under discussion at the district level.

HKIS

- The back-to-school excitement has been in the air this month, with the anticipation of meeting new friends and the possibility of new experiences. This year, we also eagerly welcome new students to our community. We look forward to getting to know each other, sharing stories and experiences, and building lasting friendships. As we kick off the new school year, we have had many exciting opportunities.
- At curriculum night, parents were treated to a glimpse of the warm and nurturing atmosphere of the school. From the welcoming speeches from Mr. Larson and teachers, parents were able to get to know the school and its staff better. It was a wonderful opportunity for parents to connect with the school community and gain a deeper understanding of the education their children are receiving.
- The school clubs have started, and students can choose from various activities. They can roller skate, learn cooking skills, play fun games, go for a run, or develop their skills as an illustrator. These clubs are an excellent way for students to explore their interests and make new friends. Engaging students in fun-filled activities will help them stay active and occupied outside of their academics.

BES

- We had a very smooth start to the school year, and students and staff alike are back into the learning groove.
- Students experienced their first cultural arts assembly. They learned about Mexico and Mexican culture through song, dance, and storytelling.
- Our 65 new kindergarten students participated in their ring-in ceremony at the end of September and officially joined our Burr Family.



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KES

- KES is off to a great start to the school year. Students and teachers are excited to be back in school. We have spent the beginning of the year focusing on building classroom communities, routines, and structures that will create the best possible learning environment for the students.
- We had our first whole-school gathering, where we brought the school community together to talk about the “KES Way” and what it means to be a student at KES. Our focus for October is Kindness.
- Our curriculum night and first PTO meeting of the year were very well attended, as everyone was excited about the school year.

Board Requests Follow-Up:

1. Clarification from last month:

Last year, the General Assembly required boards of education to provide free menstrual products in women’s restrooms, all-gender restrooms, and at least one men’s restroom, which restrooms are accessible to students in grades three through twelve in each school under the jurisdiction of the board. Section 10 of Public Act 23-160 delays the deadline boards must begin providing these products by one year, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024.

As a point of clarification, both HKIMS and HKHS have gender-neutral restrooms, but we are not required to have them. Both rooms are located within the cafeteria and are single-stall lockable rooms. They were put in place for operational reasons to help speed up the waiting process for students’ use of the rooms.

2. The new policy says we don’t have to expel a kid for having a kilogram of pot in school. What’s going to be the district’s stance on this?

The State statutes have changed this year, increasing the mandatory minimum amount held to trigger expulsion. However, according to current Board policy 5131.6, a determination can be made based on the case by the administration for punishment up to expulsion or by the Board if referred for expulsion.

3. Is the definition of chronic absenteeism per the regulation we looked at last night the same as what you reported during our retreat (i.e. 10% of school days) or is it a lower threshold of days in the metric that you reported during our retreat (i.e. 10 days, for example)

Yes, students are determined “*chronically absent*” when they cross the 10% threshold of days missed for any given year. For a school district with 180 scheduled days, which is the case in RSD 17, the threshold is 18 days out. It is important to note that 18 days absent is regardless of excused or unexcused status, and a district must report the student to the state as *Chronically Absent*.

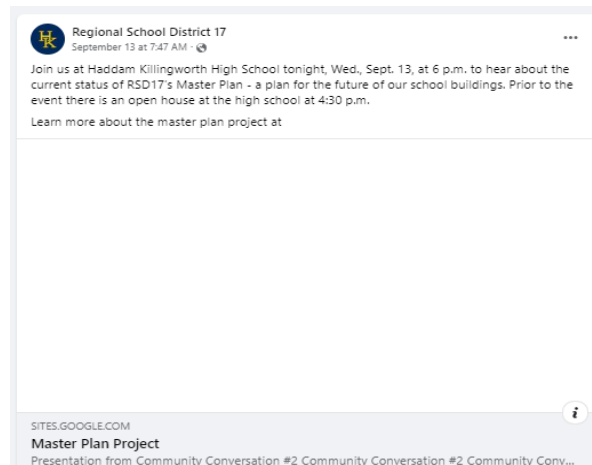
4. How many certified staff do we have(teachers)? What is the typical turnover rate? Reasons why do the certified staff leave the district?



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Currently, RSD17 has 186.2 FTE certified teachers. Twelve teachers (~6%) from the 22/23 SY did not return for the current SY. Two teachers have resigned since the start of this school year. Per a McKinsey [report](#), the annual teacher turnover rate has hovered around 8% and has recently spiked much higher. The reason for RSD17's resignation varies: retirement, moving, new education role, changing careers, more money, job dissatisfaction, and better commute.

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