



Union County Educational Services Commission

45 Cardinal Drive • Westfield • New Jersey • 07090
(908) 233-9317 • FAX (908) 233-7432

Report of the Superintendent to the Board of Directors April 1, 2020

WESTLAKE:

Enrollment as of March 25, 2019 Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0	Referrals: 3 Intakes Scheduled: 3 - on hold Accepted: 0
Fire Drills: TBD	Emergency Drills: Lockdown – Active Shooter
Suspensions: 0	March 5, 2020

March began with the celebration of School Spirit Day when all students and staff wore their favorite sports team shirt, followed by the announcement of our student of the month and the Principal's Award. Students look forward to the nominations each month in hopes that they have an opportunity to be selected.

Read across America and Dr. Seuss's birthday was during the first week on March. Hillcrest Academy South and Lambert's Mill Academy students were invited to read to our students. The students from Hillcrest Academy South and Lamberts Mill Academy also attended our spring dance and played games in Mrs. Convery's classroom to socialize with our students. Each school looks forward to these social opportunities and learns from one another. We also continue with the shared social group with the Social Worker's facilitating activities and HAS continues to visit Mrs. Palmer's Sweet Shoppe as an incentive for students.

Westlake staff were working hard to prepare students for the annual basketball game that was to take place on April 2, 2020. Teams were selected as well as cheerleaders and everyone was practicing and preparing for the game. There are certain annual activities that students most look forward to including the basketball game, prom and the Carnival. We are hopeful that we will not miss too many activities and students will return soon preparing for their next activity.

A big congratulation to Justin who was selected from Westlake school as our Unsung Hero for the Union County School Boards Association 2020 Unsung Heroes Program! We are so proud of Justin. He really deserves this award.

As we have moved forward toward the middle of March, we stepped up our preparations for a distance learning model. Teachers, therapists and paraprofessionals created packets of work to send home for two to three weeks to keep students working. These packets of work were mailed to all students and followed up

by the teachers and therapists to assist students and families to complete the work. Staff are reaching out daily on our website through distance learning with communications to families that are supportive of the individual needs of our students. Staff also are in email contact and we are beginning to use “google hangouts” as another means to video conference with families and students. Through google hangouts, staff can offer assistance with completion of work, provide additional lessons and continue to teach.

Our staff have been extremely creative in developing academic activities, social skills and providing ongoing resources for students and their families to keep them engaged. Through video conferencing with Administrators, we are communicating expectations for staff and ensuring that the needs of our students are met. Today we discussed the possibility of utilizing “zoom” a web-based video service to create group lessons for students to sign in and socialize with each other as a teacher facilitates a specific type of lesson and/or group. (i.e. yoga group, social group etc.)

The teachers, administrators and professionals continue to communicate, share resources and discuss ways to provide effective instruction remotely. At this time, we are moving towards a greater integration of video live chat groups, video modeling, paper and pencil work and online resources; many that are becoming free resources for all.

From Westlake School, we hope that you all continue to be healthy and safe!

Westlake Mission Statement

Westlake School is dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing, positive environment by emphasizing high expectations for all students, fostering independence, encouraging confidence and a collaborative commitment to functional academic excellence.

LAMBERTS MILL ACADEMY:

As of March 2020 LMA Actual: 44 LMA District - Non-NP: 40 New Point Specialty at LMA: 4 Changes: <u>2</u> Entered: <u>1</u> (Non-NP) <u>1</u> NP Pending: 0 Exited: <u>2</u> (non-NP) 0 (NP) Trinitas Hospital : Bedside Instruction: (inpatient) Day Program: Approved-Agreement signed: 55 Classified: 35 Regular Ed: 20	Referrals in March: 5 Intakes Scheduled: 5 Completed: 1 Acceptance Letters Sent: 0 Sending Districts Accepted LMA Placement: 0 Placement Pending: 0 Fire Alarms: 0 Fire Drills: 0 Security Drills: 0 Suspension out of school: 2 In School Suspension: 0 HIB:
--	---

Administration:

March started out as a very pleasant month. Several days were unusually warm and our students were able to spend some time outside of their classrooms. Several of our teachers held classes outside on the benches near our little stream, while others held classes in the garden. Our PE department as well as Mr. Brommel, our Safety Team member, was able to take our students to the basketball courts to enjoy the warm weather, stretch their legs and even blow off some steam. Several of our students were able to visit our Barber and use their earned points for haircuts. Academically several students earned honors and high honors this past marking period for earning all A's or earning all A's and B's.

Distance Learning:

In preparation for the closure of school, our teachers created Google Classrooms for each of their respective academic areas. The teachers created lessons within their classrooms and then over a period of 2-3 days instructed their students on how to use Google Classroom, including submitting their assignments.

Instructional Model:

Currently our teachers provide 2 hours per day of Instruction through Google Classroom. We are preparing to offer 4 hours per day starting in April. Right now, our teachers provide scheduled office hours so that students can receive one-to-one feedback on any subject matter they need support with. Our teachers make themselves available from 8:30-2:30 daily to provide general instruction, general feedback on assignments to parents and students and to update, modify and differentiate their curriculum. Our Related Services personnel have also created Google Classrooms and they are continuing to maintain their services as mandated by the IEP. Our related services staff will begin to implement tele-therapy using teleconference software. Moving forward our teachers will begin to introduce new topics of instruction via teleconference software. Each teacher will post a 10-minute intro to each of their lessons so that they are all giving direct instruction to their students as well as introducing new topics. In addition, I am contemplating implementing a block like schedule so that certain academics are only offered on certain

days. This will give our teachers more time to focus on in-depth academics as well as allow them more time to prep.

Family and Staff support:

To help support our families and staff I have initiated the following:

1. I personally have called every one of our parents to see how each family was doing during these troubling times. I also offered my help as well as my teams help in supporting them with the transition to distance learning. In addition to me reaching out, I have each one of my Therapists reaching out directly to the families and to the students to maintain the stability of the student, but also to help maintain the stability of the family. I have created a Remote Learning Website that is designed to support parents, students and staff. Gradually I will update the site with pertinent information including morning announcements for our students and staff.
2. To support our staff, I have hosted staff teleconference meetings in addition to group email designed to answer questions and concerns of our staff. Our Clinical Director has started an email chain that supports the health and wellbeing of our staff. Each one of us is invited to share positive updates and supportive messages aimed at improving camaraderie and a general sense of community during these times.

CROSSROADS:

Enrollment as of March 23, 2020 Actual: 49 Changes: 1 Entered: 1 Exited: 0	Referrals: 1 Intakes Scheduled: 1 Accepted: 1
Fire Drills:	Emergency Drills:

Crossroads Staff Distance Learning Plans:

The Union County Educational Services Commission Board of Education, in coordination with Crossroads School made the decision to close our Schools as of March 16th, 2020. This decision was in response to the national pandemic that has tragically altered every aspect of our students, parents, staff and sending districts lives. We are currently working collaboratively with our students, families, staff members, and sending district personnel to ensure that academic, emotional and social growth remains consistent for our children during this unprecedented time in education.

Crossroads Staff continue to work tremendously hard creating individual student packets for each one of our students. These learning packets are specifically tailored to meet the needs of each student. Classroom teachers and related service therapists worked collaboratively to create the learning packets and develop distance learning plans for each one of our children.

Each staff member created an individual website page which our students and parents can access on a daily basis. Authentic learning activities and tasks are posted every day. Our staff are teleconferencing through google applications to provide classroom instruction to our students and provide our parents with direct and

meaningful guidance. Crossroads School Administration is consistently meeting with our certified staff members as well as with Commission Administration to collaboratively brainstorm ideas as to how to proceed with our distance learning plans.

Crossroads Staff have participated in IEP meetings, communicated with parents on multiple occasions and have consistently articulated our home instruction plans to the sending districts and appropriate personnel. Our Crossroads Family will continue to work together to get through the uncharted territories that are currently occurring in our society. We view our students, families and staff as part of our family. We are committed to supporting them as well as our cooperating school districts one hundred percent!

HILLCREST SOUTH:

<p>Enrollment as of 3/25/20 Actual: 105 Changes: 12 Entered: 12 Exited:0 Suspensions: 4. Two students for suspicion of being under the influence of a CDS (one was a second offense and the other was a third offense), one for vaping in school that smelled like a CDS, and one for aggression towards staff that included disrupting the educational process.</p>	<p>Intakes Pending General Ed.: 3 Intakes Pending Sp. Ed.: NA</p>
--	--

In the beginning of March, Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS) increased the enrollment from 93 to 105 students and filled the 10 seats that are allotted for students in special education. The three schools located at 1571 Lamberts Mill Road that include HAS, Lamberts Mill Academy, and the Westlake School had one emergency drill this month. Ms. Gronert, shared-time School Counselor, and Mr Young, shared-time Supervisor of Instruction, continued to prepare for state assessments as well as the alternative portfolio process. The alternative portfolio process enables students to gain course credits through independent work so they can meet the state graduation requirements. Ms. Gilchrist, School Social Worker, tracked senior’ progress towards their graduation goals. She worked cooperatively with Ms. Clark, Paraprofessional and Community Service Liaison, to identify students, especially seniors, who required additional hours that would meet the Elizabeth Public Schools graduation requirements. She also tracked and monitored the Credit Retrieval Lunch Time Program, credit retrieval classes, the Lunch Tutoring Program, while also maintaining her individual and group counselling sessions.

This month, students partook in the celebration of Women's History Month. Various activities included lessons in classes and a student-led bulletin board creation to highlight famous women throughout history. Additionally, Ms. Clark organized student volunteers who orated quotes over the loudspeaker from inspiring women that were read during the beginning of each period and then the quotes were discussed in classes. Students participated in the weekly School Spirit day which included Pajama Day and Dress as a Twin Day. Students who participated attended the Westlake Cafe to socialize with Westlake students and enjoy special treats. The Westlake Buddies program began with four students from HAS attending Ms. Convery’s class at the end of the day for various activities. Many of these activities and others can be viewed on HAS’s Instagram page that was updated regularly with the assistance of student volunteers.

On 3/10/20 Mr. Barone, Physical and Health Education Teacher, along with Dr. Balsamello, HAS Principal, attended a CPR and Basic First Aid professional development afternoon that led to recertification for the both of them. They were able to return to HAS for a multi-school introduction to utilizing Google

Classroom for a Distance Learning Program. During the following week, staff set up Google Classrooms to assess students log-in capabilities as well as to practice utilizing this platform, and for most staff it was brand new. The 3/12/20 faculty meeting that was scheduled for webinar time for Affirmative Action state required professional development was postponed in order for administrators to meet with the staff to review Distance Learning on Google Classroom and through mailed work packets.

March's professional development day was promptly rescheduled to 3/13/20 in order to prepare for the current health crisis. That day was spent training staff for our current Distance Learning Program on Google Classroom as well as to create lessons for students with limited or no access to the internet and/ or for those with no device at home. Staff worked cooperatively in their departments to produce lessons that mirrored Google Classroom assignments and copied packet materials for up to five weeks. Staff also utilized that day to set up additional Google Classrooms and assignments. Most staff volunteered to work well beyond contractual hours helping one another in the spirit of unity towards a common goal; to educate our students and to make the transition from school to home as smooth and equitable as possible.

Over the past two weeks since school was closed starting on 3/16/20, staff have become more comfortable with utilizing Google Classroom as the main educational vehicle. Dr. Balsamello spent hours organizing each individualized packet to be mailed home with instructions and a self-addressed stamped envelope for each family. Dr. Balsamello, Ms. Gilchrist, and Ms. Gronert developed tracking spreadsheets and they have been communicating with students and parents to assess their well-being, course work, online attendance, grading, credit retrieval, and graduation progress. This has been accomplished with the assistance of teachers through the Advocate Program through Google Classroom, emails, phone calls when possible from purchased pre-paid phones, and district alerts. Dr. Balsamello worked from HAS to have access to student files to call all numbers in order to get in contact with students who were not replying to emails, had not logged into Google Classrooms, even though they reported they had internet and devices at home. He was able to communicate with the families and then created and mailed individualized work packets to these students.

The decision was made to provide students with HAS chromebooks who reported that they did not have a device at home. This was verified by contacting the families. Ms. Gronert contacted the seniors, Ms. Gilchrist the remainder of the students, and Dr. Balsamello reviewed files for families who they could not contact. Dr. Balsamello then inspected and tested all HAS Chromebooks to ensure that students were receiving the best devices, logged the serial numbers, and assigned them to students in one day. Along with the Chromebooks, students and families received a district letter explaining the e-learning program, two technology agreement forms, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for one copy to be mailed back to HAS. Mr. Marquet, Principal of Hillcrest Academy North Campus, and Dr. Balsamello prepared the devices to be mailed and they delivered them to a local vendor.

Overall, HAS has been successful with implementing the district's Distance Learning initiative. Staff have excelled, with little training, to provide education through Google Classroom for all students. Staff will continue to teach students through Google Classroom with administrators and support staff assisting the students and families where needed. Staff will be utilizing training information that includes videos provided by Ms. Dattilo, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, to ensure Google Classroom is used to its fullest capabilities. Elizabeth School District was able to provide free internet to those families without access through a telecommunications vendor. All the aforementioned proactive cooperation during this

world-wide pandemic was necessary for our students to be successful in the Distance Learning Program as well as to equip those scheduled to graduate in 2020 with the tools they need for success.

HILLCREST NORTH:

Enrollment as of: 3/25/2020 Actual: 88 Changes: 1 student dis-enrolled/ 1 student transferred. 2 students enrolled and will start upon return.	Referrals: work in progress Drills: Last Fire Drill: 2/24/2020
---	---

For the first two weeks of March, HAN continued with Student Development Plans (SDP) morning meetings every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to ensure that advocates are keeping students focused on reaching their academic and social emotional goals. The SDP process involves the principal, social worker, guidance counselor, advocate and student working collaboratively to identify areas of strength and growth in pre-established components to develop a plan that facilitates growth in two target areas for the student. It keeps students focused on reaching specific goals and provides the support they need in reaching their personal and academic potential.

Also, during these weeks, HAN has prepared its seniors who need to complete the portfolio to meet their NJ Assessment graduation requirement. We continue to meet with each potential senior to review their graduation tracker to ensure they are on track to graduate. These efforts were prioritized since our last reporting period in February. Since the closure of school on 3/16/20, HAN has been working to ensure that all students have access to distance learning.

The March professional development day was quickly rescheduled due to the current health crisis to 3/13/20. That day was spent training staff for distance learning on Google Classroom as well as to prepare lessons for students with limited or no access to the internet and/ or those with no device at home. Those students were mailed packets of work until it was determined to provide them each with a chrome book. Elizabeth was generous to provide free internet to those families without access through a vendor. This was a necessary task for our students to be successful as well as to graduate in 2020.

Administration, school social workers, and the shared school counselor developed tracking spreadsheets for communicating with students and parents to assess their well-being, course work, attendance, grading, credit retrieval, and graduation progress. This has been accomplished through the Advocate Program as well as through Google Classroom, emails, phone calls when possible, and district alerts. HAN/HAS have been successful with implementing the distance learning initiative. Staff have excelled at providing education through Google Classroom for all students. Staff will continue to teach students through Google Classroom with administrators and support staff assisting the students and families.

NONPUBLIC:

Four Nonpublic Teachers presented two chapters from the book *Teach, Reflect, Learn* to their colleagues. The presentation included interactive activities that teachers could utilize in their classrooms with their students.

IDEA funds were billed to districts for March. Security and Technology Programs continue to spend down allocations in all the nonpublic schools. The Title I Program continues to run in the schools which received funding. The Nonpublic School Nurses met to review the NJDOE Nonpublic Nursing.

The Nonpublic Services Department surveyed the districts we service to confirm the district wanted the Commission to continue providing services via a distance learning model to the nonpublic school(s) in their town. to the approximately 1,500 students we service. All districts responded, wanting to continue services provided to the 1,500 students served by the Commission.

Nonpublic teachers reached out to their assigned school(s) to identify the distant learning model their school is using. Instruction by the Commission teacher at the nonpublic school is determined by the nonpublic school. Schools are utilizing Google Classroom, Zoom, IXL Learning and paper and pencil packets. The distant learning model is determined by the school and student grade level. Nonpublic Department teachers and speech therapists contacted the teachers in their building and the parents of the students to review the services and assignments.

The Director and Supervisor are in daily contact with the nonpublic teachers and speech therapists. Google Hangout meetings are scheduled weekly with each staff member to review student programming and needs. In addition to the weekly scheduled meetings, staff members speak, text or email the Director and Supervisor daily with questions about instruction or program needs.

Nonpublic Case Managers continue to meet mandated timelines for annual reviews. Teachers and parents participate in these meetings either by Google Hangouts, Zoom or conference telephone calls.

TRANSITION:

Work Readiness Academy Anticipated Student Enrollments: 11 (Max 12)

Project SEARCH-Overlook Medical Center Anticipated Student Enrollment: 9 (Max 9)

Anticipated Sub-Contracted SLE Programs with UC School Districts: 3 (Plainfield, Elizabeth, and Summit)

Some of the highlights from the Work Readiness Academy in the month of March included:

- The program added three new community partners: the Cake Artist Cafe (Cranford, NJ), D. Lindsay Salon (Fanwood, NJ), and the Farmhouse Store Outlet and Warehouse (Garwood, NJ)
- Students worked on creating personal Google Sites (websites) so they have an e-based platform to showcase their resume and further develop IT skills.

The Work Readiness Academy has successfully transitioned to a hybrid distance learning model that includes a combination of online and live online instruction. The program distributed Chromebooks to all students' homes on March 13th and March 16th.

The distance learning program is utilizing both the Google Classroom and the Workplace Readiness Online Program through the Conover Company. Students are logging into the Google Classroom at 9am each day to complete a morning assignment posted by the instructor. Then at 9:30, they join their teacher for a live web-based call through Google Hangouts Meet. This virtual meeting allows time for the teacher to provide a “mini-lesson” and answer any questions the students may have about the assigned work. The students are then assigned an additional 1.5 hours worth of work to complete independently. The teacher is available in the Google Hangout during this time in case students need one-on-one support.

Additionally, we have provided families with information related to available mental health services, stress-reducing family activities, and resources on how to speak with their children about the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The Work Readiness Academy targets students with disabilities (ages 17-to-21) who are in need of a comprehensive transition program with a significant focus on community-based work-learning. Students are referred from sending school districts across Union County.

The Project SEARCH program at Overlook Medical Center welcomed its 4th cohort this September. Nine student interns were selected this past May from an application pool of 20 candidates.

Some of the highlights from Project SEARCH in the month of March included:

- Students finished their 2nd internship rotations and are now beginning to focus on the job search process.
- Students worked on creating personal Google Sites (websites) so they have an e-based platform to showcase their resume and further develop IT skills.

The Project SEARCH program at Overlook Medical Center has successfully transitioned to a hybrid distance learning model that includes a combination of online and live online instruction. The program distributed Chromebooks to all students’ homes on March 13th and March 16th.

The distance learning program is utilizing both the Google Classroom and the Workplace Readiness Online Program through the Conover Company. Students are logging into the Google Classroom at 9am each day to complete a morning assignment posted by the instructor. Then at 9:30, they join their teacher for a live web-based call through Google Hangouts Meet. This virtual meeting allows time for the teacher to provide a “mini-lesson” and answer any questions the students may have about the assigned work. The students are then assigned an additional 1.5 hours worth of work to complete independently. The teacher is available in the Google Hangout during this time in case students need one-on-one support.

Additionally, we have provided families with information related to available mental health services, stress-reducing family activities, and resources on how to speak with their children about the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Project SEARCH is a collaborative effort between UCESC, Overlook Medical Center (part of Atlantic Health System), the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Project HIRE (part of the Arc of New Jersey), the County of Union, the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities, and NJTIP at Rutgers.

In 2019, UCESC officially became a vendor for Pre-Employment Transition Services through the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). UCESC is currently receiving referrals from the Union County DVRS office to provide Job and Career Exploration Services to students from school districts across Union County -- at no additional charge.

UCESC is currently developing a virtual model so we are able to continue delivering Job Exploration Counseling services.

For more information, district personnel should contact their local DVRS representative.

TRANSPORTATION:

On March 13, 2020 the Motor Vehicle Commission conducted an on-site inspection of the Commission's fleet. Of the 10 vehicles in the fleet that were presented, all passed inspection. There are still 7 school buses and 4 transition vehicles left to inspect. Unfortunately, due to the Motor Vehicle Commission shutdown because of the Coronavirus, our final inspection date of March 16, 2020 was postponed until further notice. We were directed by of inspection team leader that there will be an extension on our inspection stickers because of these unforeseen circumstances. We will be contacted with a new inspection date when closures are lifted.

An updated estimate of total yearly transportation costs is scheduled to be mailed to all participating districts on April 15, 2020. With the uncertainty of the remaining of the school year's existence this is on hold until we resume regular operations. (Since billing for services rendered is done on a monthly basis and there have been many changes since the last report was sent, this report is needed by the districts for budget planning and preparation. Again, with the statewide closure in place and reopening unknown, we will revisit this upon our return to regular operations.

The cut-off date for the submission of summer school transportation applications is April 24, 2020. Reminder letters were sent to all participating districts on March 23, 2020 via email. The due date for the applications may be extended to our districts if conditions keep us shutdown. The Transportation Coordinator and Transportation staff will work closely with the districts to communicate the needs to get summer routes set up; requesting missing applications, following up on missing information, gathering Seizure Action Plans, and providing assistance where needed to ensure students are assigned transportation for the summer.

Before the shut down the Transportation office was finishing one of its busiest years ever. Bidding competition amongst the bus companies is sparse. This drives prices higher, however, we continue to provide the most cost-effective services possible to our participating districts. The number of requests and hence the number of routes operating were remaining very high. Upon exiting for the shutdown our daily route count was 838, far exceeding last school year's count of 797.

The Transportation office staff was provided a schedule to check emails on a daily basis and address any inquiries coming in from districts. Each member of the office has a designated time slot per day to check emails and voicemails and perform assignments given by the Transportation Coordinator. This has been

working out very well and districts are being serviced as best as we can with their questions and concerns. Some districts have been working on their ESY applications.

B6T transportation request forms for Non-Public transportation are due to UCESC by April 15, 2020. We have been receiving some forms via email to this date. School closures may delay these forms being received from the districts. When normal operations resume, we will follow up with our participating districts to ensure requests are not missed.

Upon returning to regular operations, the Transportation Dept. will have many challenges to face, but I am confident we will work through them together as a team and make the startup as seamless as possible.

TECHNOLOGY:

The IT Department has worked out a plan to extend the warranties of our primary systems. There are plans in place which will change the infrastructure however we will move slowly through this process, so the network remains stable and workflow is not interrupted.

All IT improvement projects were put on hold when we moved to distance learning.

Virtual private network access has been granted for the administrative staff. We are constantly providing support before and after regular hours to ensure our students and staff get the access they need.

We have implemented a conference bridge service to host Commission meetings. These conferences can accommodate up to 1000 attendees.

The need for home Chromebook and internet access is clear. We are working to provide our students' families with internet connectivity via mobile internet devices and the Technology team is configuring a management software that will enable us to filter web content once the students have the computers.

cc: Eric Larson, Business Administrator/Board Secretary