

GLOVERSVILLE ENLARGED SCHOOL DISTRICT

234 Lincoln Street, Gloversville, New York 12078

Telephone (518) 775-5791

Fax (518) 773-7280



David Halloran
Superintendent

November 9, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I hope this letter finds you well. Despite challenges related to COVID-19 restrictions, we have had a relatively smooth first quarter across the district. In recent weeks, we have seen many fully remote students return to our hybrid model. This is good because we believe in-person learning is far more effective for children than remote learning. We have not lost any instructional days thus far due to COVID-19 and our students have adapted well to requirements such as masks and social distancing. If you have a fully remote student who you would like to transition back to a hybrid-learning schedule, please contact your child's building principal as soon as possible.

Our administrative team is concerned with high failure rates at the secondary level and high absenteeism across the district. To combat these alarming trends, we have asked our 6th through 12th grade core subject (Math, Science, Social Studies, ELA and Foreign Language) teachers to transition to a predominantly synchronous learning model by December 4, 2020. "Synchronous learning" means that students, both those physically present in school and those working remotely from home, will be learning together each day. This will require students who are working from home to follow their daily class schedule as though they were actually in the school building. We already have many secondary classes that are synchronous and it is occurring in many other districts as well. The feedback has been positive.

Synchronous learning will allow our teachers to plan interactive lessons each day for all students. Each day's lessons will build upon the previous day's lesson and the students will be required to participate in class real time. Synchronous learning will allow our teachers to more effectively build capacity in students, foster healthy relationships, provide instant feedback, cover the scope and sequence of the course, take accurate daily attendance and provide a consistent structured learning environment. We are confident that a consistent daily schedule will improve learning, attendance and accountability. We believe this daily interaction will help our students socially and emotionally as well.

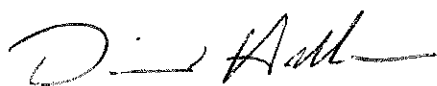
A synchronous class will not simply entail 40 minutes of teachers talking in front of a camera. A synchronous classroom provides the opportunity for teachers to explain lesson and unit objectives, introduce content, foster discussion and provide feedback. It also provides class time for students to work independently off-line or in small clusters, for both students in the classroom and those learning remotely. Essentially, we are trying to create an optimal environment for teaching and learning given the restrictions in place due to COVID-19.

Classes such as Physical Education, Art, Music, Technology, etc. are more performance-based subjects and we are not requiring these classes to hold daily synchronous lessons. Teachers in those disciplines will still be connecting with students to discuss goals, objectives, projects and progress. The objective is to build capacity and understanding in students while allowing more flexibility with the timing of learning. These classes may continue to rely on a more “asynchronous” learning model where students are not necessarily engaged in the curriculum at the same time or meeting with classmates daily. The discrepancy in our expectations between core and “technical” classes is intentional as we strive to minimize time remote students are on their chromebooks and provide the needed flexibility in performance-based courses.

Elementary classes will look different for several reasons. One reason is that we already have fully remote sections that are separate from our hybrid classes. This is not the case at the secondary level due to specialization in content areas. Expectations are also different because our Prek-2nd grade students are not transporting their chromebooks back and forth to school. This would be an unreasonable expectation given their age. We also know that some of our elementary students are with friends, relatives or babysitters during the day while their parents work, and thus unable to take part in synchronous learning. We have asked our elementary teachers to keep our hybrid students challenged and connected while at home by providing both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.

More information on the shift in secondary instruction will be forthcoming. As stated, it is already happening in many classes and we feel the time is right for this transition to be universal. We will continue to evolve as a school district as the year unfolds and may make more changes in the future. It is critical that we effectively engage and challenge your children this year. We would be remiss to ride the status quo of our current learning model, because we do not believe it is the best learning experience we can offer. It was acceptable for the start of the school year, but it is now time to improve our instructional practices and outreach efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Halloran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Halloran
Superintendent of Schools