



Hamburg Central School District

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Administration Building

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May 8, 2020

Dear Hamburg Central School District Families,

I hope this letter finds you well, despite the disruptive and upsetting nature of this continuing public health crisis. Among its most distressing effects is the closing of our schools for the rest of the year. The students bring the joy to the work of every person who works in a school, and we are heartbroken about the fact that this health crisis has cancelled in person learning for the rest of the academic year. Please know that every aspect of our Continuity of Service Plan will continue until further notice.

Since school closed on March 16th, every member of our community has been asked to step into a different role. Family members have become at-home teachers, often while also working from home. Our teachers are attending to their own family's needs while at the same time offering remote learning for their students. School-based leaders have been on the front lines of supporting teachers, students and families as we have transformed every school from an "all bricks" operation to an "all clicks" operation literally overnight. School staff members of every job description have aided our food service in the preparation and distribution of meals to families experiencing food insecurity. Our School Board members have been extremely supportive as we enacted our Continuity of Learning, Emergency Meal Distribution and Access to Childcare plans for our communities.

The Board of Education and I want everyone to know how much we appreciate the efforts of our students, families, and all of our staff members to assure children are learning and receiving the necessary emotional support, even though schools are closed. Our people have always been the strength of the Hamburg Schools, and your support and resilience is what sustains us during these difficult days.

I know that there is much conversation, if not anxiety, about what the future holds. With state budgets across the country increasingly strained by the pandemic, a federal relief bill for states and local governments is necessary to maintain funding to the nation's public schools. Now that school is closed for the year, I know that many of you want to know what we'll do about end of the year celebrations. Further raising the level of concern for educators and families was Governor Cuomo's recent announcement that he plans to "reimagine" public education with the help of the Gates Foundation.

With respect to the budget, we always begin with the mindset that we must be respectful of the taxpayer's money. Within that context, we are crafting the 2020-2021 with three key objectives. First, we want to have a budget that preserves the great programs that we currently have in place. Second, it is important that we pass a budget that gives us the greatest amount of flexibility to adapt to the changes that we know will come throughout the fiscal year. Third, we need to pass a budget that is balanced. While our ability to accomplish all three objectives is largely dependent on the details of a Federal Relief Bill, we have contingency plans in place that could allow us to do so if we get less funding from the federal government than we expect.

The Governor's recent announcement that he intends to "reimagine" education caught the attention of many of us. Our [Strategic Plan](#), assures that our students benefit from purposefully designed instruction, have the opportunity to make choices about their learning and to build self-efficacy, and form rewarding relationships with their peers and with the adults in their midst. These benefits cannot be enjoyed in the long run by students through remote learning. Our district vision, mission and core values require that our students be

in our schools and classrooms with their peers, and with our great educators to support and inspire them, regardless of any “reimagining” that might take place at the state level.

I want to express special thanks to our graduating seniors, and their families, for your patience as we work through the difficult decisions that remain about graduation. This tradition is very important to all of us, but we’ll need time, and direction from public health officials, to develop plans to celebrate safely. We continue to work with Mr. Gallagher and his team to plan a graduation ceremony under potentially more relaxed guidelines if western New York is allowed by the Governor to move into a less restrictive phase of his “On Pause” schedule. We are collecting thoughts and ideas from students, parents and teachers as we study the options for high school graduation, as well as for some of our other end-of-year celebrations across the district.

So, in the face of uncertainty and challenge, we forge ahead together. Thank you to our families for helping your children remain engaged with remote learning. We also appreciate our teachers and students, for continuing to adapt to remote learning so readily.

Most of all, please know how privileged I feel to serve this community in leadership. Every employee of the Hamburg Central School District is committed to working beside our stakeholders to help our children thrive in the face of this current public health crisis, and to recover from its effects once it abates.

I will continue to communicate with you as the circumstances require. Stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Cornell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael R. Cornell
Superintendent of Schools