

SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

A look at activities in
the Wayne Highlands
School District

SCENE



Schools Chief: Even in pandemic, *'We must deliver, that's what we do'*

STORY AND PHOTO BY KATHY DALEY

Look up the word “uncertainty” and its dour relatives rear their heads: anxiety, disquiet, trouble, worry, agitation, uneasiness.

Indeed the global pandemic has spiraled school districts into the unease of the uncertain. Wayne Highlands School Superintendent Greg Frigoletto has never seen the likes of it in

his 30 years in education.

“I was always able to say ‘you’ll be okay,’” Frigoletto said. “Now, I can’t tell you for certainty that we will be okay.”

Still, “I feel strongly that if we can adhere to our plan for health and safety, we will be okay.”

Wayne Highlands fortunately possesses the metrics that allow students to attend regular in-



Wayne Highlands School District Superintendent of Schools Greg Frigoletto continues to emphasize to parents, teachers and schoolchildren, ‘We are all in this together as we navigate through a difficult and complicated time.’

school education. But that declaration from Governor Thomas Wolf can change at any time should COVID illnesses mount.

Shortly before school opened, for example, the Pennsylvania

Departments of Health and Education tightened a rule on face covering. Masks must be on all day in school, except for 10-minute breaks and while eating lunch. Prior to that the rule, students did not have to wear masks if they were six feet apart.

The new rule was based on the American Academy of Pediatrics’ updated guidance that strongly recommended face coverings at all times for children age 2 and older in order to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

“There are a lot of moving parts,” explained Frigoletto.

LEARNING IN SCHOOL LEARNING AT HOME

In response to the various needs of families, Wayne Highlands’ six schools now offer three learning options for students, with parents agreeing to stay with a particular option through the first marking period at least.

Of the school district’s 2,400 student population, some 1,744

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are attending regular in-classroom work with health and safety regulations a top priority. That is the first option.

But a good number of parents had concerns about student health and safety and they have chosen option two: learning from home through Zoom and Google classroom. This plan allows the child at home to "be" in the classroom through Zoom. Virtually, she or he can interact with the teacher and with fellow classmates at the same time as the in-classroom learning takes place. Some 585 students are learning this way.

"This option, Wayne Highlands LIVE (Learning in Virtual Environment), allows students to stay connected to school, to their classmates and to the curriculum," the superintendent added.

Wayne Highlands Live has another benefit, he said. "If we ever get to the point that the governor says we're in the red phase (and schools have to shut down),

Wayne Highlands LIVE (Learning in Virtual Environment), allows students to stay connected to school, to their classmates and to the curriculum."

Greg Frigoletto

Wayne Highlands School District Superintendent

we already have a system in place," said Frigoletto. "On a moment's notice, we can change our delivery."

A third option is Wayne Highlands Virtual Campus. This is an online educational program of taped teaching from VLN partners of Pittsburgh, a K-12 education services provider. The curriculum is aligned to Wayne Highlands' courses of study and students remain Wayne Highlands students. Some 67 students are now enrolled in this course.

Given the COVID-caused difficulties, maintaining Wayne High-

lands' high academic standards and rigor will challenge educators. Last school year, the Scranton Times-Tribune once again heralded Wayne Highlands for excellence in education, based on standardized test scores.

"We must deliver," said Frigoletto. "That's what we do. And we're learning so many things now. We'll be better."

For example, when COVID shuttered schools in March, "the high school moved smoothly, going remote through the (practiced) use of Google Classroom. But in kindergarten through 8th

grade, Google Classroom was new to teachers. We had to overcome some technology issues but the faculty took a crash course and they did a great job."

A special grant to purchase iPads will allow every elementary and middle school student a touchscreen tablet to use and take home. The mini computers will be available in early October, said the superintendent. High school students already have take-home iPads.

After months of their kids studying from home, parents are telling Frigoletto they have a new appreciation for teachers, he said. "We are asking a lot from teachers and they are giving a lot," he said.

"We should expect there will be bumps in the road," Frigoletto added. "That's okay. We have grit and that will be a driving force that gets us through this. We will grow into these new roles. We have people who care. I tell teachers 'We got this!'"

COVID AND SCHOOL RE-OPENING



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Colorful and technology rich:

New math program for middle school

STORY AND PHOTO BY KATHY DALEY

It didn't take long for the seventh and eighth graders to weigh in on their brand new math textbook with its full-colored illustrations and fascinating things to do and learn.

"This is so cool!" they enthused when school opened on Sept. 8.

This school year, students at Wayne Highlands Middle School and at the K-8 Damascus and Preston schools dove into an exciting new math program entitled EnVision Mathematics launched by the Savvas Learning Company, formerly the Pearson

K12 courseware firm.

"EnVision offers interactive online assessments, games, quizzes, scenarios and real life problems for students to work on," said Middle School Principal Dr. Peter Jordan. "It's real-world connected and it's aligned to state standards."

That's exactly what the professionals were looking for when, in January and February last year, math teachers and school administrators began searching for a solid math program that would both engage students and align

with the Pennsylvania Board of Education's learning standards.

A team of some 15 district educators, teachers and principals both, worked together on the project, and then continued remotely when COVID hit in March. They perused seven to eight different math programs. Virtual meetings continued throughout the spring and early summer.

"Savvas came in and did training in early June," said Jordan. "Then, we had another day to help the group map things out."

Math Department leaders Laura

Lockwood and Courtney Krajkovich "led the charge," said Jordan.

"Traditional textbooks appeal to direct instruction," said Krajkovich, referring to the days when teachers spewed out information and the students took notes.

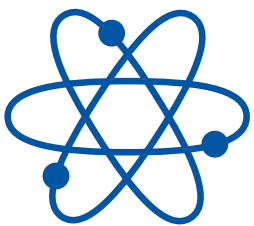
Now, with EnVision's textbook and technology courseware, students study math by means of real-world scenarios.

"On the first day of school the kids got their textbooks and their log-ins and digital access," said Jordan. "From anywhere, they can do their work."

The program is also tailored for different learning styles: visual, auditory, verbal learners, for example. "We all approach problems differently," noted Krajkovich.

Furthermore, the program reaches all academic levels of learners. Those include students who, in seventh grade, take seventh grade math to learn concepts

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A new math program is inspiring kids and teachers, say Wayne Highlands Middle School Principal Dr. Peter Jordan and teacher Courtney Krajovich.

that will be further developed in higher level math. In eighth grade, these students move on to pre-Algebra in preparation for high school algebra.

Then there are the students who are able to take pre-Algebra in seventh grade, and then go on to eighth grade algebra and into geometry in ninth grade.

The most advanced students, 10 percent of the middle school student population, can ace algebra in seventh grade, move on to geometry in eighth grade and then into Algebra 2 in their freshman year of high school, as compared to waiting until junior year, as is the norm.

Krajovich said she hears nothing but rave [reviews] about the new math learning program. "The teachers are saying "I love this."

'EnVision offers interactive online assessments, games, quizzes, scenarios and real life problems for students to work on...'

Dr. Peter Jordan
Middle School Principal |

Still, said Jordan, the work continues. "We'll have reflection and evaluation time to adjust and improve," the principal said. "You constantly need to be evaluating and self-reflecting."

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Masks, sanitizers, smaller classrooms:

A new world of learning

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY KATHY DALEY

Wayne Highlands' principals have gone Zoom-ing. In August, each school administrator employed the video conferencing tool Zoom to connect with parents about changes in their children's education. The question-and-answer sessions, which are also posted on the school district's website, explain the new logistics for learning during a radically changed educational scene.

"We've never done this before – opened school in a pandemic," said David Jagger, principal of the K-8 Damascus School and the K-8 Preston School.

Colleague Sandy Rickard, principal of the grade 3 to 5 Lakeside Elementary School, pointed out that, with kids out of school for the past six months, teachers at first would be reorienting children to the world of school.

Classrooms are now streamlined, added Rickard, due to the hard work of custodians, who emptied teacher classrooms completely and then put back a minimum of furniture to allow for social distancing.

Masking is mandatory everywhere, including on the school bus, where no more than two students can sit to a seat. Once in school, sanitizing stations with hands-free dispensers are available at the entrances and in classrooms, encouraging kids to battle bad germs. "Hand-washing is a must," said Principal Jagger.

Rickard pointed out that the District has purchased electromagnetic foggers to kill bacteria during the evening when school is closed.

Anthony Donnini, principal at the K to 2 Stourbridge Primary Center, shared with parents the

logistics for the all-important school cafeteria. So that social distancing can be maintained, he said, other areas of school will turn into eating places as well. Those include the foyer and the gym.

School water fountains are turned off (too germ). Instead, students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles. Wayne Highlands Middle School Principal, Dr. Peter Jordan, pointed out that the schools have touchless refill water stations for kids' plastic bottles.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

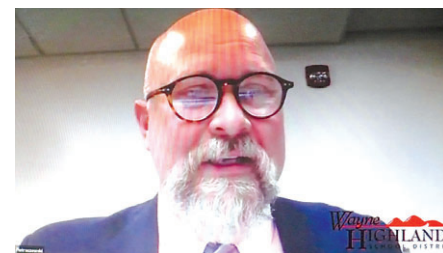
The principals explained the three learning options for this first quarter of the school year: traditional learning in the classroom with safety measures; Wayne Highlands LIVE whereby students work from home using ZOOM and Google Classroom to engage with teacher and classmates; and Wayne Highlands Virtual Campus, which is an educational program of taped teaching from a Pittsburgh company.

In his Zoom session, High School Principal Chris Pietraszewski elaborated on Wayne Highlands LIVE.

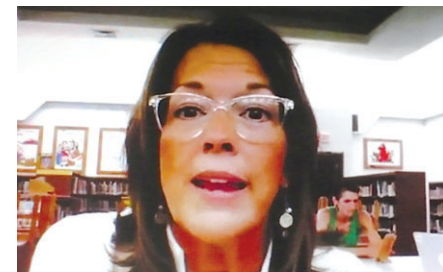
Pietraszewski pointed out that, for example, a history teacher might find himself simultaneously teaching lessons to students in front of him in school along with teaching to kids working at home. Just like their classmates in school, at-home students can ask questions and interact with their teacher and fellow classmates.

But what if the at-home student can't get on the computer because his mom works from home and at particular times, needs the bandwidth? No problem, said Pietraszewski, because the history teacher is also recording her presentation to the class. The student at home can view the lesson later.

Jordan of the middle school



Honesdale High School Principal Chris Pietraszewski connects with parents through the online tool Zoom as he informs them about Covid-changing rules and learning in school.



Lakeside Elementary School Principal Sandy Rickard squares parents at home through the specifics of transportation, safety, classroom work and more.

pointed out that, should the District have to go to all-remote learning as happened when schools were shut down by the State of Pennsylvania in March, the District is ready. Furthermore, parents who have no device for their child's at-home learning may contact the school district for help.

Jordan had to impart the sad news that band and chorus will not be available for his students. That's because projecting voices and instruments played by mouth could cause germ transmission. He noted, though, that teachers may offer personal, one-on-one time for students to engage in music or voice.

Field trips are also on hold, but junior high and high school sports with safety protocols are planned.

"We're charting unprecedented territory," reflected Principal Sandy Rickard to her Zoom audience. "We will be flexible and make changes as needed."

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To face down a pandemic, district turns to caring partners

STORY AND PHOTO
BY KATHY DALEY

What does a school district do in an emergency that's bigger than its borders? It strategizes and collaborates.

In July, the Wayne Highlands School District unveiled its health and safety plan after substantial guidance from Wayne Memorial Hospital in the do's and don'ts of keeping kids safe in school.

The District's own Pandemic Team included educators as well as administrators, school nurses, the transportation department, building and grounds staff and food service professionals. The Pandemic Team went on to collaborate with Wallenpaupack, Western Wayne and Delaware Valley school districts to develop a common plan.

Meetings with the Wayne/Pike Department of Health, Wayne/ Pike Emergency Management continued in spring and summer, along with connections to the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Like schools in most places across the U.S., Honesdale High School greets its students with the message 'welcome back, stay on task, and wear your mask.'

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