



Outreach

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One Year Later:

Adapting & Advancing Instruction

Just about one year ago, we were forced to make the switch to full distance learning, and while our transition was a smooth one, we believe there is always room to grow. As a district, we have used the last year as a learning tool and spent time figuring out what was working well and what may have needed more refinement to maintain our values and commitment to keeping education fun and engaging.

Although we all know in-person learning is what is best for our students, the district's priority this year was making sure each child and staff member felt comfortable, safe, supported and engaged, no matter where they were. We held workshops with our teachers this past summer to help them deliver instruction in new and effective ways. These workshops

helped our educators navigate the learning curve of mastering in-person, remote and hybrid teaching models.

At the high school, especially, we have really leveraged the technology that has been in place for all of our learners. The learning management system Canvas has become a hub for our teachers to provide students with information. Parents have access to Canvas, too, allowing for easy communication between educators and families. This ultimately helps us to better support and stay connected to our students. Technology also has helped us expand the walls of our classroom for remote learners. Webex allows the face-to-face connection that is so important in maintaining relationships between students and teachers, featuring breakout rooms that

keep our students in touch while some are in school and others are at home.

A whole host of apps, including Actively Learn, Flipgrid, Mathspace, Padlet and Pear Deck, have allowed high school teachers to engage our students as well as introduce new assessment opportunities. This year, teachers have presented more project-based learning and authentic tasks to students, allowing them to think outside the box and be more flexible in how they share their ideas.

Our high school students now have more choice and involvement in their education through the implementation of DREAM Days. DREAM stands for Drop Routine, Explore and Achieve the Mission. It lets students take the wheel, learning and participating in activities of their own interest that align with the Mineola Mission. DREAM Days are another step in bettering our students' educations and adjusting our curriculum to keep them engaged with the challenges of this year.

We have adapted and made changes that have helped us expand our curriculum while still focusing on social-

emotional learning and building relationships between students, staff and faculty. We continue to utilize our advisory program, which gives students the chance to speak with teachers in a smaller environment regarding their concerns unrelated to academics.

When it comes to our students' well-being, it is important for us to provide the valuable experiences students look forward to outside of the classroom. In light of this, the high school created a Senior Day to celebrate the Class of 2021. This allowed our senior class to come together for the first time since last March and participate in games and activities together, along with high school staff members. Consequently, we adapted many of our extracurriculars, such as holding virtual club meetings, to help make things as normal as possible.

Looking back on the past year, not only has the district been able to adapt, but we have been able to achieve, thanks to the collaborative efforts of our Mineola school community. As the year progresses, we look forward to being able to apply all we've learned to whatever challenges lie ahead.

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Highlighting Health and Safety

Along with adapting our curriculum to accommodate educational needs over the past year, we have also had to update our health and safety guidelines. Our new protocols have allowed us to meet our students' academic and social-emotional needs in the safest way possible. While physical distancing became one of the most important rules for us to follow, our new health plan still allows us to build close relationships with all our students.

Once we were underway with full remote learning last spring, our staff and nurses immediately began devising a plan to welcome students back into our buildings. Our school nurses came together with our Director for Pupil Personnel Services Catherine Fishman to go through the state and CDC guidance for opening schools, and from there a new health and safety

plan was outlined and implemented, which allowed us to welcome back nearly 40 students for in-person learning through the district's special education program as early as July 1. This was our first go at having students back in the building since March 2020. Every single student returned happy and eager to learn, despite the need to adhere to safety procedures such as mask-wearing and proper handwashing, which were incorporated into the curriculum. Most importantly, students returned to a familiar setting with their supportive teachers and staff.

Building a strong connection with students has been a priority for our district, shown by the multiple ways we were able to stay in contact and provide them as many typical school experiences as possible. For example, prior to opening up for our special education program, we



were able to offer our students a memorable Special Olympics despite the in-person event being canceled. Teachers and therapists were able to go to students' homes, and while keeping socially distanced, filmed students participating in athletic activities outdoors. These videos were then edited together to make the virtual event come to life. Our teachers were able to maintain the relationships they had built during remote learning, even once their students came back to the classroom.

Throughout the rest of the summer months, faculty and staff spent time preparing for a larger reopening come September. We spent countless hours reviewing guidelines and implementing social distancing efforts in our buildings. The district also established a relationship with the Department of Health to consult on cases and contact tracing.

It's been important for us to be

transparent throughout this process. We held multiple meetings with parents and community members prior to schools reopening. Not only did these discussions address the physical health of our students and staff, they also addressed mental health supports. Our district support staff members were able to contact and support any families who were uneasy about their child's well-being as it related to the pandemic and returning to school. It has helped us to understand our students, which in turn has allowed us to better their educations during this unusual time.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many challenges, it has helped to teach us what is truly important. We have been able to offer our students a comprehensive education, prioritizing relationships and accommodating the health and safety needs of our whole school community.



Vaccination Partnership

As part of our commitment to keep our students, faculty and community safe, the district has partnered with NYU Langone in an attempt to get our whole staff vaccinated against COVID-19. At the start of the partnership in January, 90% of our staff signed up to receive a vaccine.

Throughout this unprecedented year, we have done our best to mitigate the spread of the virus in our buildings. This partnership, the first of its kind for school districts, is a continuation of the efforts we have put in place to keep health and safety a top priority.

"I am extremely thankful to NYU Langone for arranging to get our entire staff vaccinated so quickly. It will allow us to return to some type of normalcy faster than we anticipated."

- Superintendent Dr. Nagler

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