



Evesham Township School District

Meland Administration Building, 25 South Maple Avenue, Marlton, NJ 08053

www.evesham.k12.nj.us · (856) 983-1800 · Fax # (856) 983-2939

Dr. Justin Smith, Superintendent
Mr. John Recchinti, School Business Administrator

Ms. Danielle T. Magulick, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Richard G. Dantine, Jr., Director of Personnel

Oct. 23, 2020

Dear ETSD Families,

This update highlights: our approved updated Calendar, free Community Halloween events, a Post-Winter Break Learning Plans Survey coming soon, a Budget Update, and How to Contact Legislators. This letter breaks my record for length--a reflection of our times.

Calendar

Our [Updated 2020-21 ETSD Calendar Full Year](#), approved at last evening's Board meeting, shows Cohort days for the full year. Our goal as always is to return for full in-person instruction this year. Achieving that goal depends on how the NJ Dept. of Education guidelines shift, such as the 6 foot spacing between desks. We will continue to monitor for any guidance changes that would enable bringing more students into each room.

This will not be the final calendar version for the year. I will be recommending a further version of this calendar for approval at our November Board meeting. Particular Remote Learning Wednesdays from January through June will be converted into Cohort A and B days, in order to increase in-person learning, so desperately needed. Converting these RLWs has been made possible through a decision regarding our paraprofessionals that I explain below in the Budget Update section.

Free Community Halloween Events!

- Evesham Education Foundation Halloween Movie Night tomorrow Oct. 24
 - Still a limited number of tickets available for this Free Family Event! Please note the location has been moved to Evesboro Downs Park.
 - [Evesham Education Foundation Halloween Movie Night Oct. 24](#)
 - Eventbrite sign-up link:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/halloween-tailgate-movie-night-tickets-124320248209>
- [Little Chiefs' Trunk or Treat! Oct. 31](#): fantastic event run by our incredible HS students!

Post-Winter Break Learning Plans Survey Coming Soon

We are developing a Genesis survey for all parents of all remote students, as well as for all parents of Preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1, where 4 days of in-person learning per week have been available for every student. This survey will let us gather parents' choices for the time period starting Jan. 1, 2021. Our goal is to be able to provide equitable learning opportunities. Please note, if more parents choose in-person learning via this survey than chose it via our survey in August, it may only be possible to offer 2 days of in-person per week in particular grades/schools. You will receive more information when we release the survey near the end of next week. We will be doing everything possible to provide what our families are looking for.



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Budget Update

Our district must cut \$5.4 million from the 2021-22 budget (down from \$5.8 million after the elimination of 4 positions at last evening's Board meeting...more info below). Our state aid will be cut an additional \$1.6 million in 2022-23 and a further \$1 million in 2023-24. On top of that, the pandemic has increased costs and reduced revenues. Even starting this year, a range of roles and areas of operations will be impacted as we examine each new circumstance presented by the pandemic for possible savings. Our goal is to reduce the negative impact of these cuts on our children, knowing though that negative impact cannot be avoided. But please know this, as clearly as I can say, the goal throughout this entire process is to reduce the negative impact on children.

Our budgetary situation is very painful, as it affects staff, our district family. Remote Learning Wednesdays, as shortened days, resulted in fewer paid hours for particular hourly employee roles, resulting in potential loss of health benefits eligibility for around 30 paraprofessionals starting on January 1, 2021. As these days have not existed before, their impact only became clear after the start of the year and was communicated with the paras as soon as possible at that point. Shortening the Wednesday of every 5 day week to create Remote Learning Wednesdays was a compromise worked out between district administration and the union that represents 98% of our staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals. Before the start of the year, the union was pushing for an all remote start--no in-person instruction for any children--and if not that, then for every day to be a shortened day, which would have resulted in all our paraprofessionals potentially losing eligibility. That we all should be all remote (no in-person learning), or if not, then that all days should be shortened days, is still the union position.

This entire budget process, which will last years, is complex and iterative. That means, as a Board, a superintendent, and district administration, we are always discussing, listening, in the dynamic landscape of our times. Through that discussion we have determined that our 170 paraprofessionals will be paid for their typical full day hours on the Remote Learning Wednesdays, thereby maintaining benefits eligibility for any para (70 total) who would typically earn it this year. I'll say that again, *our 170 paraprofessionals will be paid for their typical full days on the Remote Learning Wednesdays, thereby maintaining benefits eligibility for any para (70 total) who would typically earn it.*

Personally, I am very glad for each paraprofessional who benefits. For a few of them, I have taught their amazing children, who are now grown up as amazing adults. My heart has been sick about this. At the same time, I am sick and distraught at the prospect of what additional cuts must come instead, and what the impact of those cuts on children will be, as by January, we develop next year's budget.



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Our district exists to serve students. In part as the shortened days of Remote Learning Wednesdays will now be paid as full days, some RLWs will be converted into regular in-person Cohort A and B days. I will submit an updated calendar at our November Board meeting showing which Remote Learning Wednesdays (January thru June) have been converted. This conversion benefits students, as they will receive more in-person learning. Some RLWs will remain as such, to support teachers in their work to support students.

Furthermore, \$485,460 in savings were achieved through 4 staff reductions approved at last night's Board meeting. All 4 are cost savings steps being taken now, made possible by continuing to examine each new circumstance (e.g. retirements, resignations) presented this year partly due to the pandemic. In especially huge and positive news, Ms. Kelly Camm, Curriculum Supervisor, will become the new principal of Rice Elementary School, effective Feb. 1, 2021. Ms. Camm is a talented and experienced administrator who has served our district most recently as Curriculum Supervisor, specifically from Preschool through the Elementary Grades and in areas including science, health, technology, and mathematics, as well as many other responsibilities. Prior to that role, she worked as Curriculum Supervisor in the Mount Laurel School District, and as an elementary teacher in ETSD.

She brings a wealth of experience to this position and is excited about her new assignment at Rice Elementary School, which provides opportunity for continued growth and professional progression. In the short time I have known Ms. Camm, she has continuously demonstrated her skills as an educational leader committed to student achievement, analyzing data to benefit outcomes, and establishing effective protocols for successful school operations. She is an excellent listener and builds connections and relationships with staff, students, and families. From Evesham to Mount Laurel, she is spoken of in superlatives. The timing of this appointment enables Ms. Camm to work with Principal Tami Aronow over the months ahead in preparation for an effective transition. Given our challenging budgetary times, this appointment enables our district not just to retain our very best talent, but also for that talent to make an even greater positive impact on students.

How to Contact Legislators

As this topic came up at our Board meeting last evening, I am reprising a portion of my 10.2.20 Friday Update below. The boldfaced portion is especially germane to last night's discussion. We will expand our website to include a page devoted to advocacy, along with a template of an email to legislators tailored to our district's specific situation. I will share the page link and template in a future Friday Update.

- Using our "time, talent, and treasure" to support the great work of our PTA/PTO organizations.
- Supporting the Evesham Education Foundation. <https://eveshameducationfoundation.org/>
The Evesham Education Foundation is a completely independent non-profit 501(c)(3),



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nonpolitical organization formed to enhance and enrich the academic experience for all ETSD students.

- Donating directly to our district via our three-tier [ETSD Donation Form](#).
- **Using our voices. All voices help--community voices even more than administrative (e.g. superintendents') voices.**
 - **Contacting state elected officials.** This webpage from our receiving district has links to NJ legislator contacts, along with sample emails.
<https://www.lrhdsd.org/Page/10201>
 - **Extending the timeline for state funding reductions is the one key step I advocated here** [ETSD Superintendent Testimony to NJ Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee](#)
 - **Developing a Fair Funding Committee.** Local example:
<https://www.facebook.com/FairFundingCH/>

Thank you all,

Dr. Justin Smith
Superintendent of Schools