

Forest Hills Forecast Transcript for Aug. 21, 2020

Hello Forest Hills families and staff members, and welcome to the 12th edition of the Forest Hills Forecast. This week, I want to speak with you about the importance of building solid foundations for our classrooms. I also want to speak with you about what the first few weeks of the school year will look like and also I want to speak with you about what happens after week two at the elementary level and what happens after week four at the secondary level.

So the importance of building classroom foundations. We know our teachers are excited for the school year to begin. Excitement is building in our students as well. Even though this school year will look different than all others, it still begins with the same fundamental things in place. And the first thing teachers always do is they build great foundations in the classroom. What do I mean about foundations? It's really the relationships that are formed between the teacher, the student, the community that is built within the classroom among all of the students and the teacher. This strong foundation of relationships, and social and emotional learning, and building these connections and community in the classroom, forms a foundation on which deep learning takes place throughout the year. It builds bonds of trust that are necessary for students to be able to say what it is that maybe they're still fuzzy about from their learning in the spring. It builds those connections among students where they can work together in collaborative ways and as team members, and this takes time.

So as we are in the first few weeks of the school year, you can expect to see evidence of this type of work taking place and not only the creation of bonds and community in the classroom, but this year, like never before, we have to focus in on new routines and protocols—all the things from lunch, coming into the classroom, to hand-washing, to social distancing. We want to be able to teach all of that with our students at all grade levels and take the time to do that.

So as you see remote learning on the days that your child is not in school, expect to see some of these types of things which are building those connections and community with people in the classroom and people at home.

Now, how is it that the first few weeks of the school year might look in our classrooms. I want to explain that again, we're going to have half the number of students in our buildings and half the number of students in our classroom who are here in the classroom in person, and then the other half of students who are at home. And teachers at different grade levels in different subjects will work through this a little bit differently in each day and each circumstance. But what will be common is that teachers check in with the students at home. We know that attendance and participation are all mandatory components as we go through these remote learning days, but there will be times when teachers are able to give materials and assignments to students the day that they're in school to use on the next day when they're at home. And there will be times when teachers check in with students who are here in the classroom and at home at the same time. Teachers have computers with cameras on them. We have new updated Zoom accounts where we can check in with all the students at home and we can even display the students at home for their classmates here in the classroom. And the teacher can be the one facilitating the interaction that's taking place. Now again, this will look different in different classrooms at different times and look different in different content areas and teachers will communicate that to families at home certainly at the elementary level, and they'll communicate those routines and practices to the students themselves at the secondary level as we go throughout these first few weeks of the school year. So learning continues when students are at home. It can happen in that way of teachers handing materials to students to use the next day when they're home. It can happen with teachers recording or sending home what we call asynchronous lessons or a flipped classroom is maybe a term that you've heard where the teachers prepared things off the regular schedule of the school day, but it's recorded that and then send that home for students to access at the time of their next school day when they're at home, and it may also be this live interaction which we call synchronous type of work where the teacher can take questions from students at home. The teacher can

go through some facilitated instruction with both the students who are here in person and the students that are at home. So, it would be a combination of those things as we go throughout these first few weeks in school.

Now for our Candid Conversation. What will happen after week two at the elementary level and what will happen after a week four at the secondary level? Well, what we are constantly doing is we are constantly monitoring what's happening in our own schools, in our own communities, our own townships, and regional areas. And then we're looking beyond that. We know that there are school systems that have already started in our county that will be a couple weeks ahead of us and not only in school systems that are taking a hybrid approach the way we are but other school systems that are bringing all their students back to school. So we will learn from those experiences as well and we will keep a close monitoring on what's happening in our own schools.

My commitment to you is that by halfway point of both of these two weeks and four week systems where we've got the hybrid plan in place, at the halfway point, so at the end of week one for the elementary programs and at the end of week two for our secondary, programs, we will provide an update for all of our families. We will gather information from our staff members, we will gather information from our principals in all of our schools and we'll use that information to decide how we deploy next at week three at the elementary level and at week five at the secondary level. We want to provide that communication to our families with ample time moving forward.

It's sort of like driving a car one of those stick shift cars when you're at full highway speed. Maybe you're in fifth gear. In a normal school year we might make it to fifth gear in the middle of September and we're at that full highway speed. This year, we're going to start off in first gear intentionally. We're going to monitor what happens in order to make sure everything is working well in first gear before we move to second gear. And so we will be slow and intentional and making sure that we're doing all the things correctly, that our students are doing well, that our staff is doing well, that we're meeting those basic needs before we move to the next gear in this whole system.

We don't want to do anything in a way that would cause us to have to go backwards in some way shape or form. So communication will continue to be important. But I think it's going to be great to begin to establish those relationships, building those solid foundations in our classrooms that is important work regardless of what type of educational format we may find ourselves in at any point in time. That's great fundamental work.

So again, thanks to our teachers, thanks to all of our staff members who are working so very hard, thanks to all of you for your patience. I know this is not easy. And again with the 1,500 students who have chosen the virtual option for this first semester and the over 8,000 students who have chosen the hybrid model, we thank all of you. We cannot wait for the school year to begin and to get back to great learning. Until next week, stay safe and take care.