



Superintendent's Report August 11, 2022

Summer is passing by quickly! As of today, there are 21 days until teachers and staff report to school and 26 days until we welcome students back to school! Our administrators, secretaries and custodians are busy getting everything ready for school to open. I remind and encourage students to keep working on the optional summer reading and math activities posted on the [Hillside School website](#) and on Schoology for Tenakill students. These activities will help students keep their academic skills sharp over the summer.

As we prepare to open school, our *Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service* is posted on [the district website](#). However, there is an anticipated update from the CDC on operational guidelines for schools, with simplified and streamlined recommendations. Once any changes are announced, we will update the *Safe Return Plan*. Meanwhile, we continue to encourage everyone to stay up to date with vaccinations. Masking will remain optional as school opens. The most frequent question I have received this summer is: Will middle school students have lockers? And the answer is yes! All middle school students will be assigned a locker this year! If parents have any questions or concerns about COVID-19 prior to school starting, they should contact their child's principal. Once school starts, COVID-19 questions can be directed to the school nurse.

The New Jersey Department of Education is once again requiring districts to administer the *Start Strong* assessment for English Language Arts grades 4-8, Mathematics grades 4-8, Algebra I, and in Science grade 6 within the first weeks of school. These assessments are in addition to the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA) that were given this past spring. The *Start Strong* assessments take about 45-60 minutes and provide immediate results to teachers. The *Start Strong* assessments utilize three performance levels: "Strong Support May Be Needed"; "Some Support May Be Needed"; and "Less Support May Be Needed." The assessments will be given between September 6, 2022, and September 30, 2022. The window for testing is very short this year! Principals will provide more exact information about when students in grades 4-8 will be taking the *Start Strong* assessments. However, a group of nine education groups have sent a letter to Governor Murphy and Education Commissioner Allen-McMillan asking for *Start Strong* to be eliminated or that districts be permitted to apply for a waiver from the administration of *Start Strong*, particularly if they can demonstrate they are implementing an assessment program that provides them with data and information that accomplishes the same goals and benefits as *Start Strong*. If this is permitted, we will submit a waiver since we use Linkit! Assessments, which provide better information about student academic progress than *Start Strong*. I will keep everyone posted if the *Start Strong* assessment is cancelled.

As summer continues, I am excited for school to reopen! Enjoy the last weeks of summer!

Vincent Mc Hale