



MEMORANDUM

To: State Board of Education & Early Development
Date: November 3, 2021

Thru: Commissioner Michael Johnson
Telephone: (907) 269-4583

From: Janelle Vanasse,
Superintendent/Director
Mt. Edgecumbe High School
Subject: Agenda 10D. Mt. Edgecumbe High School Standing Report

Note from the Superintendent

The school year has proven to be both challenging and rewarding. We did experience positive COVID cases after entrance travel and some weeks of slow spread. I am very thrilled to announce that at the time of this written report, we have had four weeks with only one positive case with students and staff. MEHS tests a large portion of our students and staff weekly. Our students have done an excellent job following our mitigation plan. They are getting quite anxious though to do more off campus. Despite the city of Sitka remaining in high-risk status, our COVID plan implementation team has approved some activities that allow students to get off campus when we can minimize risk. The students are very excited about this, it is amazing what a trip to the grocery store can mean for a MEHS residential student.

Responding to learning gaps and the results of the wide variety of learning experiences our new students had last year has also proven to be challenging, yet rewarding. We have made some adjustments and have found ourselves utilizing a lot of our tutoring and emotional support services to address needs.

Current Enrollment

We left 18 beds empty for quarantine at the start of the year and have needed each of them frequently. The following table shows the class size at the start of the year compared with October enrollment. We have already had additional students leave in November that are not captured in this chart. The number of students leaving to date is high compared to recent years. The reasons for leaving are varied, however we feel it is tied to the overall impact of a stressful few years for students and families. Many students have said that the increased activities off campus have been a morale booster and we hope this will help.

Capacity- 394 Beds (29 day students- Sitka)

Grade					
9	0	110	110	104	95%
10	86	32	118	112	95%
11	103	4	107	106	99%
12	81	5	86	81	94%

Returning numbers include students who were accepted last year and deferred because of COVID.

Instruction Focus

We have found many opportunities to problem solve ways to respond to learning gaps and credit issues that are a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the many different learning situations students have experienced in the last two years. In addition to our tier 3 math and reading courses, we have worked with students to make sure they can continue their credit advancement while being placed in courses that are the best fit for learning needs. Here are a few COVID response actions we have taken to address needs for specific students. Each of these are being considered on an individual bases, some will only be allowed this year with the evident impact of COVID, others may be continued in future years:

- Repeat a course for credit. This is most frequently used for math courses. Some new and transfer students describe a lack of confidence from the online or packet experience they had last year. If test scores also support a lack of mastery, we allow for a course to be repeated for credit. (Approval and COVID allowance only)
- Online and credit recovery options are being provided to students missing credits or needing to accelerate to get to higher rigorous courses prior to graduation. (Using this time to pilot this model for continuation)
- Offering more courses during evening or in the morning during 1st hour (an extra period for most students). (May continue after COVID)
- Allowing limited substitutions when tier 2 or 3 classes were needed, but the COVID distance time or delayed reentrance to core credit classes. (COVID allowance only)

Above all else, our access to tutoring and emotional support services in the evening are key. Unfortunately, we have had a hard time in filling our tutoring positions and filling our additional COVID funded mental health position. The needs are great, and we will continue to work on recruiting.

Volunteer Positions Highlight

MEHS has a robust program of hosting volunteer positions to enhance what we can offer to students. These positions have proven to be even more critical this year as our students have many individual needs as they too cope with the impacts of a long pandemic. Here is a quick summary of these position:

Americorps:

We host two Americorps volunteers. These positions focus on increasing the recreation opportunities for students, but also have specific tasks to support individual student needs. Both positions take on individual students who may need additional support in building social skills. They also take a lead role in our Freshman study hour program and managing our merit buck store. The Merit buck store allows students to “buy” items—things they need like laundry detergent & deodorant—with “merit bucks” they earn from their duties like cleaning their room.

College & Career Guide (Alaska Fellows program):

This position provides direct services to students in planning and exploring for post-secondary. The position works intently with our seniors in navigating all of the necessary paperwork, FAFSA, Scholarships, Applications etc., yet also works with younger grades to help students see themselves as college-capable at the younger grades.

Internship & Work Experience Guide (Alaska Fellows program):

This position was new last year, but even in a pandemic make a huge impact. This positions links students with opportunities in town and even online that provide internships. This has included Sitka Sound Science Center in Sitka, but also some distance web-based internships with national Tribal organizations. We hope to also allow students who wish to do more of a work experience that opportunity, however it may need to wait another year given COVID.

Student Success Guide (Alaska Fellows program):

This is new position this year and is working directly with students on a healthy success plan. The initial student participation came from our new “commitment to clean” program, which is a drug prevention program. Students who have had a drug use violation or who have indicated they have a use problem in a survey, are invited to participate in this program. Students meet weekly with the guide and build their own individual plan on ways to avoid use and change old bad habits. They voluntarily take drug tests and celebrate success. They do have the option of self-reporting once without discipline if they do make a mistake. We have about 10 initial participants and all have been able to remain healthy and clean. We are now having our Student Success Guide take on a few additional students with different issues, yet ones that may be well served with regular meetings and an individual healthy plan. We are very excited about this new position and how it is impacting students.

Pool Update

We have continued to operate the pool with our mitigation plans for the community in high risk. We are not open for community swims, but have continued swim lessons, lap swim, and therapy use. Our students have used the pool more than ever. Since they have mostly been restricted to the campus, our recreation pool times have become very popular.