

Superintendent's Message

Dr. Stephanie Starcher

I want to welcome our students, staff, and families to the 2021-2022 school year at Fort Frye Local Schools. The district has reorganized its grade configurations to create a grades 6 through 8 middle school, and has new programming in several other areas so this is an exciting school year for the Cadets! The first official day for students is Thursday, August 26. Kindergarten teachers will be communicating more details about school opening with individual families. In the meantime, you can contact my office with any questions.

As the time for school to reopen draws near, some staff members, students, and community residents are wondering what this school year will look like after the very atypical school year that occurred last year. I want to be as transparent as possible as your Superintendent in sharing information. It is often very difficult to provide information when health directives have changed regularly at the county, state, and/or federal level. Fort Frye Local Schools is planning for the 2021-2022 school year to be similar to a "regular" school year, being mindful that COVID-19 and various variants of this virus are still significant health concerns. We will update our community if new health requirements are enacted.

The state of Ohio reinstated mandatory standardized testing this past spring, and families will receive their students test results once we return to school. As expected due to the loss of in-person learning during the spring of 2020, student performance on these assessments dropped dramatically statewide. Fort Frye also observed a decrease in our standardized test scores, although we continue to be above the state average in almost all areas. Ohio will release state report cards rating each school and school system this fall based on last year's data. If you have any questions about state report cards or assessments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

During the summertime, our buildings are thoroughly cleaned and much maintenance work occurs. Additional facility projects have been occurring this summer to prepare for housing a middle school on one portion of the high school campus and to launch a second preschool at Beverly-Center Elementary School through the Ohio Valley Educational Service Center. These projects have been funded by federal grant monies. Some electrical upgrades have been necessary as well.

Last summer, many classrooms at Fort Frye High School had a new HVAC system installed so that these rooms were air-conditioned. We continued to utilize window air-conditioning units in some rooms as well. Due to the availability of federal ESSER funds, additional HVAC work is going to be completed so that almost all classrooms at FFHS will have a system in place that can provide air-conditioning as well as a possible second heating source in addition to the boiler system if necessary.

Given the older age of all our school buildings, the district custodial and maintenance staff and various contractors have also worked cooperatively this summer with the state fire marshal's office to ensure that systems and structures meet code. This has been a very time-consuming process, and the efforts of our staff are greatly appreciated!

As older technologies expire, the district has made an investment in over 500 new Chromebooks for students to use, and will continue to be one-to-one with student devices in the district. The district has also purchased *Big Ideas* as the math curriculum in grades K-5 so students will experience the use of a different textbook resource.

The teamwork of our students, staff, families, and community was very evident during the unusual school year in 2020-2021, and we look forward to working with all of our stakeholders to have another successful school year at The Fort in 2021-2022. Let's go Cadets!