

Dr. Christopher Tamburro, President
Mary Anne Halbert, Vice President
Diana Romano, Vice President
Heather Darata, Treasurer
Corrie Majestic, Secretary

Verona Education Association
Safe and Effective Schools Update
Striving for open, safe, and effective schools for Verona students.

Dear Verona Community:

The children of Verona are our most important resource, as they will be our neighbors and leaders in the future. We must make every effort to ensure that our students are getting access to the excellent education that Verona Public Schools are known for throughout Essex County and all of New Jersey.

As such, we would like to bring to your attention, that from the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and even now, our goal has been to open our schools to educating our children with in-person instruction, as soon as we can. To do this, we must engage in an honest discourse about what safe and effective means in terms of opening. In fact, not every Verona school needs to be in the same lane in terms of opening, that by treating each school separately, we can engage in meaningful dialogue toward opening safely.

Recently, the Verona Education Association voted upon a resolution that reflects that we have a “vote of no confidence” in Dr. Dionisio, Verona Public Schools Superintendent. This resolution speaks to our concerns in how Dr. Dionisio has been handling our Covid-19 School Reopening response, and has engaged in decision-making practices that have had severe detrimental impacts on the students and staff of the Verona Public Schools. We feel that he has let us down, let the schools down, and let you, the taxpayers and members of our community down. Our staff is simply not behind him. To read our resolution, visit us here: www.veanj.org.

Repeatedly, Dr. Dionisio has put forth a narrative that there is stakeholder involvement in decision-making; however, his unilateral approach to crafting policy and plans rarely incorporates, in any measurable way, feedback from parents, the staff, or our community, designed to optimize the educational and workplace environments. When decisions are being made “to meet the bare minimum” of safety standards put out by the state, it is clear to us that our students are worth more than “bare minimum.” These decisions undermine the VEA’s attempts to return to in-person instruction and increase the risk of exposure to all of us. By choosing to willfully ignore the input of important stakeholders, like the SCA, the Association, and our community, Dr. Dionisio places our entire district in a precarious position.

The October 9 announcement that some of our schools will return earlier than Dr. Dionisio announced on September 24 means that there has not been enough planning to develop a model that is most

Verona’s teachers, medical staff, counselors, child study team members, administrative assistants, custodians, maintenance staff, paraprofessionals, and technicians united in service to our community and profession.

effective for our students. His announcement states that he will survey parents and staff on October 30 *after* revealing and implementing the plan beginning October 19. There will be no way to incorporate stakeholder feedback in any meaningful and transparent manner prior to students going back to the buildings.

Since the beginning, we have offered sensible, science-based solutions and suggestions that will create a safer and more effective environment for our students and staff. We have outlined easy steps that are well within the Verona Board of Education's ability to address. We continue to offer assistance to administration and the board, so we can open our schools to in-person instruction as soon as possible. Instead, our superintendent chooses to ignore our input and make costly decisions, both economically and in human capital, that does nothing to put us on a path to success.

We have laid out our recommendations here: www.veanj.org and invite you to read through them and see for yourselves, that we truly want what is best for our students and staff. We encourage you, our community members, to call our Superintendent and reach out to the Verona Board of Education in order to ensure that they are putting Verona Public Schools back on the right track for safe and effective in-person instruction.

Sincerely,

Verona Education Association