



HENRY HUDSON TRI-DISTRICT

Atlantic Highlands Elementary, Highlands Elementary,
and Henry Hudson Regional School Districts

Dr. Tara E. Beams, Tri-District Superintendent of School
tbeams@henryhudsonreg.k12.nj.us

February 2, 2023

Dear Henry Hudson Tri-District Community,

Since May of 2021, the Boards of Education of Henry Hudson Regional, Highlands Elementary and Atlantic Highlands Elementary have been fully committed to trying to make the regionalization of the current districts that make up the Henry Hudson Tri-District a reality. The Boards of Education and the administration firmly and passionately believe that by regionalizing our existing districts we will reap important and critical benefits such as governance and operational efficiencies, opportunities for expanded programming and learning for students, and the pathways for growth, collaboration and professional development for our staff. We also recognize that by consolidating and streamlining the districts, the districts could reap several financial benefits that ultimately will have a positive impact on our taxpayers and communities.

While the goal and focus of the Boards of Education are appropriately on making decisions for our current constituent communities, families, students and staff, we have also been open to and working towards the possibility of welcoming students from Sea Bright into the newly formed PK-12 regional district. To that end, in July of 2022, after completion of a feasibility study and much deliberation, all three Boards entered into a joint petition with the Atlantic Highlands, Highlands and Sea Bright municipalities to state of our intention of 1.) forming a PK-12 regional school district with Atlantic Highlands and Highlands and 2.) the membership of that PK-12 district to Sea Bright, when and if the Commissioner of Education approves Sea Bright's withdrawal from the school districts (Shore Regional High School District and Oceanport School District) to which it currently belongs.

The Boards remain committed to the intentions expressed in the joint petition presented to the Commissioner of Education. However, as we have continued this process, a significant challenge to the legality of the regionalization due to Sea Bright's withdrawal were filed with the Commissioner by Oceanport and Shore Regional that is impacting the Board's primary goal of a quick and timely regionalization of the current districts of Henry Hudson Regional, Highlands Elementary and Atlantic Highlands Elementary. To date, the Department of Education has remained silent on decisions or actions related to our joint petition, and the legal appeal presented to the Commissioner of Education on behalf of the Shore Regional and Oceanport School District continues to present significant delay the process.

As a way for the Boards of Education to continue a strong push towards their primary goal of regionalization for the three current school districts, at a joint meeting of the three Boards of Education held on January 31, 2023, all three Boards of Education unanimously voted on a resolution permitting our legal counsel, the Busch Law Group, to file the appropriate application to the Department of Education, seeking the Commissioner's approval to move forward with the request for regionalization at this time as the first, critical step in this process, while Sea Bright works through their complicated withdrawal from their current districts. This step does not in any way diminish the Boards of Educations' intent or desire to eventually have Sea Bright join the new regional district and reap the potential tax savings and educational benefits that their membership may bring. That is still very much a goal of the Boards. However, this is an attempt to expedite the actual conversion to the all-purpose K-12 district so that we can begin to focus our energies, expertise and resources on our staff our students and their long-term success.

In the coming months as this process unfolds, we will share regular updates with communities via our Board meetings, town hall meetings, our websites and social media. We encourage members of the community to attend these meetings and ask questions. Call your local Board representatives and they will help to explain the process. Your participation and feedback are important as we take these steps, and we hope that you will allow us to educate you on the factual information guiding our decisions.

Our responsibility as Board members is to use the factual guidance that we receive from our professional services, our administration and our consultants to make the best decisions for our most precious resource, our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility to our taxpayers. We believe that this step towards the shared goal of regionalization does just that and we hope you will join us in moving our school districts forward!

Thank you,



Michael Gannon
President
Henry Hudson Reg'l Bd. of Ed



Rebecca Wells
President
Highlands Bd. of Ed.



Karin Masina
Vice President
Atlantic Highlands Bd. of Ed.