

Sterling High School

KnightLine

Volume 4, Edition 1



Do You See Me?

By: Raina Boykin and Ayanna Brown



“Can I touch your hair?” “You actually have both parents?” These are two common questions minority students are asked by other white students. As a young child, I grew up in a predominately white school. At certain times in my life, it was very difficult to grow up in this type of environment. Racial slurs were said to me, I witnessed others given unfair opportunities, and I didn’t feel seen or understood. When recent issues surrounding racial injustice reached a boiling point, I did not expect Sterling to do too much about it. However, for the first time in my life, I was grateful for a surprise. When I returned to school for orientation we engaged in conversations about equality and equity. I was relieved to finally start talking about these important issues that directly impact my life. Most schools either sugarcoat these topics or dare to explore them because they are considered “too controversial.” I am proud to be a part of a community that sees value in how I feel and wants to bring attention to these issues.

Sterling High School recently took a unique and well thought out approach to introduce Equity Training to the students. With racial tensions and protests increasing throughout this challenging year, there was an obvious need to foster the subject of discrimination that could occur in and outside of the school. Many of the activities spanned from bonding with other students, finding similarities, discovering things about fellow friends with varied topics, and learning the difference between equity and equality.

One activity provided many students the opportunity to give others a glimpse into what it is like to walk in their shoes. Students were challenged with questions based on experiences and situations that may have occurred in their own lives. With each question the students were asked to take two steps forward or stay in the same spot. These were difficult topics that caused many different opinions among my peers. There seemed to be half of the students not caring as much for the activity, while most of the minorities, like myself, appreciated the chance to be seen. It was for me, extremely relatable with some questions demonstrating the challenges I survived. Every step taken allowed others to see that we have not all had the same privileges simply due to the color of our skin or economic background. There seems to be a disconnect in High School where struggles in our lives are normalized. This activity broke the boundaries of the pupil’s struggles, and many people acknowledged they were uninformed and shocked to see the vulnerability that many of their peers displayed.

Right now, the most vital thing is to have understanding and compassion for everyone, especially those who have been targeted in prejudice and discriminated upon. By highlighting that, Sterling High School should be highly commended for their efforts to include the students in equity training.



Restarting

By: Alyssa Cruz and
Danye Benjamin

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the spring, schools were forced to abruptly shut down in-person learning. Many schools, including Sterling, have made the decision to reopen their doors to students for the 20-21 school year. The top priority was to make sure we could provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. In order to put together an effective plan, the Restart Committee was formed. The committee, consisting of 15 teachers and members of administration, met virtually on a weekly basis to make decisions that would be in the best interest of the Sterling community.

One of the first things the committee did was create a survey for parents to hear their feedback on remote learning. Surveys were then sent out to parents and closely analyzed

upon return. The committee's main goal was to use this data to reflect on and create a plan to move forward. Once they had all the information, the committee began to discuss and create mock schedules for the students. Ultimately, they decided on Blue and Silver cohorts and a fully remote plan. In addition to the schedule, the committee also felt as though there were many important topics to discuss with the students. With all of this in mind, they planned a student orientation for each grade level.

As we all thought, the school life we knew was going through major changes. The teachers and staff wanted to make sure their students were aware of these new changes, so they conducted an orientation. This orientation was broken up by grade level and cohorts. Students learned how to use Microsoft Teams and its features. This is the computer program teachers and students use for instruction and video calls.

COVID-19 has impacted our lives greatly, it is not the only change happening in the world. This year has been very influential in the fight to end racial injustice. Equity Training was brought into the orientation by the staff. During this training there were multiple activities that made students think and see the similarities we all share. By the end of the training we also realized our differences should be respected and honored.

Positivity is a wonderful thing to share. During orientation BIU came to the classrooms to share what the club is about and how students can join. We all need a little help keeping our priorities in focus. Guidance Counselors also visited classrooms to help students sign up with Naviance. All in all, orientation helped students get engaged with the new school year and topics going on in the world today.

A Day in the Life of a Fully Remote Student

By: Abby Cortner

Being a student during a pandemic, especially Covid-19, is a lot different than I would have thought. I thought when I first heard about Covid-19 that I would be terrified of getting it, not be able to keep up with my schoolwork, and struggling to get by each day. I was very wrong!

Every morning, I wake up at 7:00 AM to get ready for school. My parents and I made the decision for me to stay home for remote learning. Once its around 7:45, I go onto my computer and wait for my teachers or classmates to start the Microsoft Teams meetings. I have these meetings from 8:00 until 11:57, or basically 12:00. Then, there is a lunch break from 12:00 to 1:00 and then there are twenty-minute meetings for the same classes until 2:30.

This schedule took me a while to get used to, and many people wonder what going to online classes feels like and how I feel about them; personally, I like the online classes. I feel like I can get my work done faster, study for tests more easily, and I remember things more. Sometimes, if I finish work early in some classes, I can work ahead on other classwork. I get to know when quizzes and tests are and can access the study guides and notes the same way the hybrid students do.

I can also write things down in my phone during the last five minutes of my classes to help me remember when projects, reviews, or classwork is due so I can study or work on assignments on time. When it comes to remote learning, the only downside to it in my opinion is socialization.

Due to not meeting in person for my liking, I do not get to meet new people and make friends. I know a few kids in my classes already or get to know them as only classmates, and not friends

Because of Covid-19, my freshman year of high school was a lot different that I would've expected

By: Najay Lewis

A way of learning that no other generation has experienced. How does a student learn in the year 2020? As a fully remote student at Sterling High School there are pros and a lot more cons to participating in school through a computer screen. The chances of getting sick are obviously lower when being fully remote, which is the best factor of choosing to stay home. Being able to stay in bed, wear pajamas, and eating during class are the only things I enjoy about being home; sadly, there are a lot of cons too.

Interacting with classmates and teachers are harder than ever, you can talk and answer questions when necessary but it's not that same as seeing people in person. Learning new things is very difficult because you can't help but get distracted by things in your house, such as your phone. As someone who learns hands-on and needs extra instruction, it feels like I must teach myself at home. The teachers are doing their best, but information goes into one earbud and out the other, even when I try hard to understand. The amount of work I get is reasonable and surprisingly less than what it was when we first started remote learning in March, the only downside is that students have different sources of internet, so some are slower at getting work done than others.

Overall, remote-learning is hard to adapt to and it makes me appreciate going to school in person no matter how much I complained about it before.

What it's Like to be a Hybrid Student

By: Mackenzie Revaitis

As we all know, this year has been hectic mainly because of the pandemic that is spreading throughout the world. Schools had to think of ways to safely teach students without exposing them to the virus. Sterling High School is doing a really good job at helping us with this. They have allowed students to attend school whether remotely or hybrid. I chose to go hybrid because I work better when in school.

Being a hybrid student in Sterling means that a student would attend school in person two days a week and remote learn the other three days Sterling decided to arrange the students in groups (Blue cohort and Silver cohort). The Blue cohort is for the students whose last names start between letters A-L. These students attend school in person Mondays and Thursdays. The Silver cohort are M-Z and go in on Tuesdays and Fridays.

When attending class, it feels weird not having everyone in the classroom at the same time. Normally, there would be about thirty students in a classroom, but now, there's four or five. It was very difficult as a freshman to adjust to the schedule because this is our first year in this school. We were not able to learn the building before one-way hallways were introduced. During the middle of September, school became easier because I was getting used to the schedule and my classes. My schedule is different than most because I have a 3A schedule. A 3A and 3B schedule during the pandemic is when some students who take a certain class, usually an elective, attend class earlier than the rest of the school. Normally, those classes would be during the student's lunch time.

All in all, Sterling is executing this schedule very well. I've heard many good things from my peers on how they feel about the schedule. I strongly believe that students will have a good school year in spite of the current situation.

By: Allison White

As someone who is on the hybrid schedule, it is very different. Going to school only two days a week for half a day, the other days fully online, is weird, but also done for the safety of the students. But on top of that, anyone who is involved in other activities will tell you they're also odd. Meetings are now online for groups like NHS or BIU, and the music program is also very different. For the safety of the people involved, we play our instruments or sing outside away from each other and wear masks when we can. We do what we can to make progress so we can play at the football games or our winter concert, and though it looks different, it is better than not doing it at all. In times like these, things may look different and even discouraging at times. But, taking these safety precautions to keep activities that may be deemed a health risk, allows teenagers to stay involved in school and not feel isolated.

Being in school also looks different. There's less kids physically in classes and we're all spread out. Originally, the one-way hallways were hard to understand, but after the first week I figured out a good route to take, so I'm not too late for classes. One thing that is extremely different is the lack of focus on my part when I'm at home. For me, it's hard to focus on just one thing, so when I'm at home, there's also something I need to be doing, or else I will zone out entirely because I'm not physically there and so there is no incentive for me to pay attention. However, when I'm in school, I'm more likely to focus because I'm not in the comfort of my own room. I'm somewhere that I know it's time to focus, and if I zone out, I'm still there.

From the Principal's Desk

By: Jarod Claybourn

The start of the 2020 school year has been unprecedented, and the amount of planning and preparation dedicated to this school year has been anything but typical. However, in true knight form, we always rise to the occasion. In my first year as Building Principal, many people have approached me expressing their sympathy in starting a new position during the pandemic. My response has been more positive than many might expect. The pandemic has brought challenges to education that have yet to be navigated by previous school leaders. As a result, we can tackle these challenges in new and un-comparable ways.

The success of our return to school is a result of the tireless efforts of stakeholders throughout our school community. The Administration worked closely with the Restart Committee, Pandemic Response Team, and Cares Act committee to plan and implement specific measures to provide students and staff a safe educational facility and experience. Our staff has accepted this challenge with open arms and eagerness to meet the needs of their students. This process has been enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding.

Our teaching staff conducts live and synchronous lessons in creative ways daily. As a result, they can maintain academic rigor and maximize the time spent on their curriculum. Our maintenance staff continues to go above and beyond in their professionalism and remain vigilant regarding cleaning and sterilizing the building. Our technology staff effectively collaborates with staff to offer new resources that continue to enhance our 1:1 device initiative and the needs of synchronous instruction. They also work effortlessly to assist students in accessing instruction through Microsoft Teams. Additionally, our support staff and paraprofessionals serve in new ways which help promote the ability for our teaching staff to instruct students within the hybrid schedule.

As a result of all these efforts, our students have had the opportunity for in-person hybrid learning where many of our neighboring districts have never had students step in their school buildings. Overall student attendance has increased this fall to 96%. Thank you all for your support in this effort.

While we have a lot to celebrate, we are aware the challenge is not over. As the situation pandemic remains fluid, we are committed to continuing to act in the best interest of the students and community. We all must continue to do our part to remain safe and practice pandemic appropriate personal care measures, which include making sacrifices to our normal family planning as it relates to social distancing and travel. Additionally, every individual must do their part in being forthcoming with personal health needs and completing daily self-screenings. The Sterling Administration will continue to collaborate with our committees to remain up to date and efficient in planning and providing schedule modifications as necessary to prioritize safety in this learning environment. 2020 has been a challenge, but a challenge that the stakeholders of Sterling high school have met head on. We will continue to do so in 2021.

**"In the middle of difficulty
lies opportunity."
Albert Einstein**

A Message from the Superintendent

Greetings,

By: Matthew Sheehan

The 2020 School Year: The Road Back

Sterling High School was placed into Remote Instruction on March 16, 2020 due to the global pandemic, COVID-19. The Spring Semester of the 2019-20 school year was drastically changed for our administration, staff, students, and our surrounding communities. We lost the opportunity to interact with our co-workers, no more in-person classes, athletics, and activities. We were forced to come up with new ideas to provide experiences for our students; virtual sports / activities, virtual spirit week, and virtual prom. We were introduced to the terms COVID-19, Zoom, synchronous vs asynchronous instruction, and contact tracing. We were urged to wear masks, wash hands, and to watch our distances around others. We were being asked to make community minded and responsible choices. Our efforts culminated in a memorable, community based virtual graduation ceremony. We showed resiliency. We showed strength in being together apart.

The Governor issued “The Road Back” plan in late June. The challenge was to be prepared to have schools open for in-person instruction for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Sterling High School formed three committees; Restart Committee that focused on instruction, in-person, remote, and hybrid learning models. Pandemic Response / Safety Committee worked on student/staff safety, health screenings, and mask wearing; Operations / Facilities Committee which focused on Cares Funding for PPE, classroom set up, handwashing stations, hallway traffic flow, and signage. The committees addressed the thirteen critical areas identified by the Governor and NJDOE for safely opening school, and we decided that we were on target to safely open our building in September.

We also had to complete typical school opening practices. We interviewed and hired eight new staff members, prepared our building and grounds for athletics, planned for the return of our staff and students and updated and issued student tablets. Sterling also completed a Solar project, which allows the district to run more efficiently in a cost saving effort. We were excited to add a new parking lot and a renovated outside cafeteria area covered by solar canopies. The building was ready. Our plan was sound. How do we begin?

Mr. Claybourn, our Admin Team, and our committees created an extended orientation. We had to reintroduce our staff and students to the “new normal” of attending Sterling High School. Staging areas, health screening, designated traffic flow in the hallways, and required mask wearing were the new norms. We had to navigate the anxiety of being close to others. The decision was made to open on a Hybrid Schedule that consisted of Blue and Silver student groupings for in-person and remote instruction. We had to heal the wounds left by social injustice that was viewable in real time across our country during the spring and summer months. An Equity Team, consisting of staff members, was tasked with creating a starting point for the healing and then committing additional time and resources to develop our equity skills for more thorough courageous conversations and activities to be planned throughout the school year.

It has been an unprecedented, emotional, hectic start of the school year. We have all worked very hard to provide a safe, welcoming environment for all our students and staff. I am proud of what this school and this community has accomplished by working together. I also understand that we have many challenges ahead. As your Superintendent, I look forward to your continued support of our efforts to educate your students and to provide them with the best experience possible.

Please stay strong, stay safe and stay the course, and we will get through this together. In the words of Winston Churchill “Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.”

Mr. Shepard Introduces a New PE Class

By: Chris Salto

Mr. Shepard, also known as Shep, added a thrilling and invigorating new unit to the Physical Education curriculum. This school year Sterling added the Physical Education Biking and Trail Unit as another course option for students. The idea for this unit was born from Shep's personal passion for bike riding. Since the pandemic there have been some restrictions and limits placed on gym activities. Instead of seeing this rule as negative, Shep thought to create a course where the students could get outside and explore. "Every year I try and brainstorm new ideas for activities and units for our department. This year I was thinking it would be great to incorporate a fun and healthy outdoor unit, where the students could benefit from the wonders of nature, while getting a great work out. Especially, since we are under a pandemic. This activity would allow for great social distancing while riding the bike course and would take the students minds off the stress they may be experiencing." In addition to the physical benefits one gets from bike riding, Shep also wanted to address the mental health issues many students may be experiencing as a result of the pandemic.

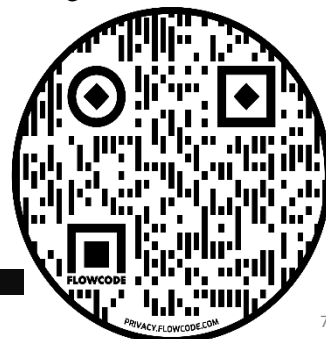
How did he get these bikes? Well, Shep is a well-respected and very important man who loves to organize things. He responds, "Important" – Well actually, I was speaking with my family who are very supportive in the things I do. They were excited about the New Bike Initiative and expressed interest in donating some brand-new bikes to the class. Which we have over 10 new bikes right now.



So, I want to say a special thank you to: my brother, Montique Shepherd, "DCGS Lead Test Cyber Security Engineer" for the Air Force, Sister, Simone Talley, Niece, Monea' Shepherd-Computer Engineer for the Air Force. Montique-II "CDC Lead Public Health Analyst." Mother, Vernie Shepherd, all for their donations of brand-new bikes and helmets. Also, some staff members: Mr. Klenk, Mr. Baitinger, Mr. Scully, and Mrs. Kraemer all for their contributions of bikes. And I also donated 2 bikes. So, it was combined effort from everyone!" Shep gives so much to the Sterling community, and his determination to make this unit happen is proof of that. I feel as if he really cares about the school the way a teacher should and always wants to make Sterling a better place.

Lastly, what's next for Mr. Shepherd? Well, he has been trying to develop more ideas for the future. He has been working on an idea for a new unit called the "Jump Rope Unit." He says that there will be different skills of jumping. There will be the basic, double dutch, trick jumps, and many more. He also says that it is a part of conditioning and training for other sports and a good way to get in shape. Another idea he shared for the unit is that he can do some competitions outside and have some fun. Thank you to Mr. Shepard for encouraging us to try new things. I wish him the best of luck and hope he continues to create more great ideas for the students.

Scan QR code to
view Channel 19's
interview with Mr.
Shepard



Thanking our Veterans

By: Marklyne Wiersman

On Wednesday November 11th, Veteran's Day, Sterling High School JROTC cadets and their families helped deliver meals to retired veterans in the community around Somerdale, Stratford, Hi-Nella, Voorhees and Magnolia. The meals were prepared by Sterling's culinary teacher, Mr. Dan Riley, and about 50 meals were prepped and delivered. The cadets would take the meals from the kitchen and transport them outside to the 20 students and parents who volunteered to deliver the meals to the veteran's doorstep. Upon retrieving their meals, the cadets saluted the veterans and thanked them for their service. Overall, the cadets did an amazing job to help celebrate those who served.



JROTC students prepare to deliver meals

Sterling Welcomes New Staff Members

Danielle Dolce

- Position: Guidance Secretary

Lauren Kocher

- Position: Guidance Counselor
- College: Rutgers University B.A.
- Seton Hall University M.A.

Sofia Caphina

- Position: Spanish Teacher
- College: Rowan University

Jason Shivers

- Position: Business Teacher
- College: Rowan University



Tyler Shields

- Position: Science Teacher
- College: Rowan University B.A.
- Concordia University- Portland M.Ed.

Elizabeth Viereck

- Position: Individual Education Teacher
- College: Wilmington University

Leah Knestaut

- Position: Individual Education Teacher
- College: Rowan University