



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

October 2, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Based on feedback and observations about the significant needs of our most vulnerable populations of students, we will initially bring back our Special Education students in the ABA program before November. Please read about this below. As we understand there is no perfect substitute for in-person teaching, we will be addressing the needs of additional groups of students before November as well. Please be assured that safety and health remain our utmost priority and all plans will be implemented utilizing protocols as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the New Jersey Department of Health, as well as our medical team of experts; namely, the Montclair Health Department, our school physician, and our district nursing supervisor.

As we begin our in-person instruction, I urge you to follow safety and health guidelines at home in order to protect you and others that your children will come in contact with as they come back to the school buildings. *The Road Back*, to borrow a phrase from the New Jersey Department of Education, is a community effort and responsibility.

Special Education - ABA Plan

Students in Pre-K through Grade 5 who participate in an ABA program will be the first group slated for in-person instruction. We will use the classrooms at the Charles H. Bullock School where they are up to code. All necessary health and safety checks will be in place including temperature taking, proper mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing. If a child cannot wear a mask, a safety shield will be required and the medical team must give permission on a case-by-case basis. Before the start of in-person instruction, a detailed safety plan will be shared by the Pupil Services Office as well as training in health protocols for parents/guardians before sending your children to school.

Special Education Supervisors will be calling parents/guardians of students in the ABA classes to ascertain specific needs next week. These individual intakes will allow us to inform teachers of experiences over the past seven months that will impact teaching and learning. Additionally, those parents/guardians who wish to have their children remain on remote instruction may do so. The remote instruction will continue with synchronous and asynchronous learning as it is currently being provided. To ensure that our remote learning meets the needs of students, we will be observing breakout rooms in Zoom to make improvements and provide more training where needed.

Once the intake meetings are complete, scheduling, transportation, arrival and dismissal, and other classroom details and instructions will be shared with parents/guardians.

Facilities

Based on discussions with the Business Administrator, the Director of Buildings and Grounds and EI Associates, the engineering firm assisting us during this effort, there potentially will be classrooms that will not have mechanical ventilation circulating air. The short-term plan in these rooms will be to utilize non-mechanical ventilation to increase air flow and also to use our recently purchased portable air purification units. This will be combined with efforts to minimize classroom sizes and change filters to Merv 13, based on manufacturers' recommendations. All of the short-term work is currently in progress.

Live-streamed Athletic Events

We are pleased to bring you the news that our Woodman Athletic Complex, Fortunato Field and Watchung Field have all been equipped with the capability to live stream our varsity high school competitions. The [link to access](#) the streaming and the full schedule of games can be found under the parents' dropdown section on our homepage. Girls Soccer will be broadcast tomorrow at 2 pm.

Week of Respect

October 7-11 is Week of Respect, and we know your children are participating in activities and projects, as well as dressing in their school colors or wearing special, fun outfits. Take a photo and send to jfusco@montclair.k12.nj.us for inclusion in our *Week of Respect* article on the district website.

Parent/Community University

A survey will be sent out next week for feedback on the first and future installments of this tool, designed to help build families' capacity for supporting their children's remote learning academic outcomes. Our hope is to expand the technology offerings but also add components that deal with the social emotional aspects of teaching and learning.

Technology

We continue to distribute devices and hot spots to our students and families in need. This week we distributed an additional 60 devices and eight hot spots. We encourage anyone who is having technical difficulty to contact our Technology Support Line at 301-259-1510, Monday through Friday from 8 am to 3 pm.

Devices are distributed from Hillside School every Tuesday during the hours of 9 am to 12 pm. Please place your technology request with your children's school.

We are pleased to announce that our Safe Check walkthrough temperature monitoring kiosks have been deployed to Montclair High School (Main building and Annex), Nishuane, Glenfield Middle School, Northeast, Hillside, Charles H. Bullock, Buzz Aldrin Middle School and Watchung School. These units are capable of reading up to 70 staff and student temperatures per minute. For those schools that do not have kiosks, we will be using contactless, hand held thermometers.

Food Service

We are happy to announce our Food Service provider, Pomptonian, will continue to distribute meals to our families beginning Oct. 5 on Mondays for three days' worth of meals and on Wednesdays for four days' worth of meals at our current locations: MHS, Northeast, Bullock, and Nishuane from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. This new offering is for not only the school week, but a full seven days' worth of meals.

Community Resources

A Food Drive for Essex County residents will take place at Bullock School on October 8 from 9 am to 5 pm.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services is providing tuition assistance to parents/caretakers with school-age children ages 5 to 13 in need of childcare due to remote learning. [Details and application.](#)

Through the USDA Child Nutrition Program, nutritionally balanced, free lunches for all students [are available for pickup](#) Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm through December. The [free/reduced lunch program](#) is also available to families who qualify.

As we get closer to the implementation of in-person and hybrid learning, I can't emphasize enough that we must consciously make every effort to abide by health and safety guidelines. The district will be using a multi-tiered approach to mitigate risk for our students and staff, and I want to thank all of you for being our partners in this effort.

The next meeting of the Board of Education will be on Wednesday, October 7, at 7:30 pm. A link to join is posted on the homepage of the district website closer to the date.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent

All Kids can Learn ~ All Kids are Special