



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

August 7, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers, and Staff,

With these weekly updates, my goal is to not only provide new information as we develop our plans, but also to help you feel comfortable in knowing that all of our decisions are based on the wellbeing, health, and safety of our students, staff, and community.

What will happen when school starts in September? What date will children return to in-person classes or to virtual classes? Answers to these questions and many more will be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document we will issue next week. For the questions where we have complete answers and for those questions that are still somewhat unknown, we want to assure you that we are prioritizing the physical, emotional, and educational health of our students.

In this update, we provide answers to pressing concerns we have received this week.

Ventilation

The district is currently reviewing all standards and guidelines set forth by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) with respect to the proper operation of all HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems throughout the district. In addition, we are working to ensure all federal, state and local guidelines are being satisfied. Specifically, the NJDOE has issued guidance based on information from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) to limit the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus. With the help of engineering professionals, a survey of the district is currently underway to evaluate and assess the HVAC systems for compliance with the ASHRAE and NJDOE guidelines. Our focus is on health and safety, and classroom spaces occupied by students and staff will be designed for proper ventilation, airflow, and social distancing.

K-2 Instruction

A survey was sent to K-2 parents this week so that we can determine the number of students who may need bussing. We continue to work on solutions to provide in-person teaching and learning for our youngest students as well as develop a robust remote model so that we are prepared for both the hybrid option and fully remote option. We are planning to offer a morning and afternoon in-person session for all K-2 students four days a week for 2.5 hours each day.. On Wednesdays students will be fully remote with virtual instruction from their teachers.

Special Education

Evaluations and testing have begun onsite at Bullock School and the DLC. We expect these to continue through August provided the safety and health protocols remain stable. As I mentioned in my last update, we are planning for students in self-contained classes to attend school in-person five days a week for three hours each day. All other Special Education students who receive services such as, In-Class Support/Resource Room, will adhere to the general education schedule to the greatest extent possible.

Assignment to the Mounties or Bulldogs

More information will be provided about **when** assignments will be made by August 17. Please understand that only children in the same family will be grouped together. As the Hybrid model is complex, there will be no further iterations for selecting which days your child goes to school. Nor can we honor requests for friends or other families. However, the district is working diligently with community partners to provide more childcare options and will report out on this soon.

Both the Mounties and the Bulldogs will follow the same pattern:

Mounties: Monday/Tuesday in-person; Thursday/Friday remote; Wednesdays remote

Bulldogs: Monday/Tuesday remote; Thursday/Friday in-person; Wednesdays remote

Changing Options after the School Year Begins

Please note that once you have selected either the Hybrid or Fully Remote option, your child(ren) will remain in that option for the marking period. We will have a process for you to request a different option and will evaluate it based on safety and social distancing.

I extend a thank you to our Board of Education, Mayor Sean Spiller and Township Council Members, President Petal Robertson and the Montclair Education Association, President Joseph Putrino and the Montclair Principals Association and all our community partners for their efforts to support our students and families during this difficult time. I value the leadership of our administrative team at Central Office who together with our staff and community have shown flexibility, creativity, patience and perseverance to work in partnership to seek solutions for a successful reopening of schools. This is a wonderful community that shows strength in a crisis, and I am grateful to be part of this charge.

We stand by your children, we stand by our staff, and we stand by our community to support and address your concerns. We will always base our decisions on the health and safety of everyone involved. Please remember that our FAQ document with questions you have posed will be coming out next week.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent