

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 13

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

March 12, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

I am happy to announce that on March 9 the District and the Montclair Education Association (MEA) reached an agreement whereby in-person, hybrid teaching and learning shall commence for all Pre-K and elementary school students April 12. We recognize the importance of ongoing collaboration and a Reopening Committee has been formed composed of MEA and District leadership. In the upcoming weeks we will provide more information regarding opening our middle schools and the high school. We recognize the importance of in-person instruction for our secondary students and are committed to bringing them in as soon as possible.

In the weeks ahead, principals and the District will be sharing details about the elementary opening. Walkthroughs will be taking place the week of March 22 and all parties are reviewing documents particular to the opening. We are thankful that teachers and school staff are now in a priority group to receive vaccines. Plans for vaccine administration for our district are below. Additionally, a plan for voluntary batch/pooled and PCR testing for students and staff at the schools is under development. See below for recent articles from a company that will be presenting to the Board on March 15 about pooled testing. These testing processes are another layer of health and safety protection for all.

Please see district updates below:

In-Person Instruction

For families of PreK-5 students, please take a moment to review your choice for your children's placement in either a hybrid or remote option. **If you wish to change your option from remote to hybrid, you must notify each child's principal via email no later than 5 PM on Wednesday, March 17.** If you wish to change from hybrid to remote, you may change at any time by notifying the principal.

Please note that Mountie/Bulldog classification remains the same regardless of whether or not you are changing your option.

Additionally for PreK-5, if you have already requested a change with your principal, you do not have to repeat the request. Updated rotation groups will be visible in Genesis on March 19 when the third marking period begins.

Vaccinations for Staff

I am happy to announce that through a collaboration with Supervisor of Nursing Betty Strauss; Chief Medical Officer of Mountainside Hospital, Dr. Valerie Allusson; Chief Executive Officer of Mountainside, Tim O'Brien; Mountainside Director of Patient Safety and Vaccinations, Jill Ryan; Director of Montclair Health Department, Sue Portuese; and Township Mayor Sean Spiller we will be rolling out a COVID-19 vaccination program for District staff. The Personnel Office will email staff Monday with instructions for how to sign up to receive vaccines. The first administration will be on Friday and Saturday of next week. I am so grateful to the people who have worked so hard to make this happen and fully support their efforts.

Pooled Testing

Articles and videos for your reference:

- [This article](#) highlights the reaction from Massachusetts teachers unions in response to the statewide program
- Here is an article from the [Atlantic](#) discussing the Massachusetts testing program
- [Here is the announcement](#) for the Baltimore program
- [Baltimore's video](#) introducing its pooled testing program
- Monomoy School District in Massachusetts shared a [video](#) introducing its testing program (the sound track does bring some intensity)
- An [instructional video](#) made by a 2nd grader in Pennsylvania

Technology

If your children need devices, please reach out to their principal who will assist with creating a work order. The Technology Department will coordinate dates and times for technology pickup. Currently, we continue to distribute devices every Tuesday from 9 AM to 12 PM and from 1 PM to 3 PM at Hillside School (Entrance B, Red Door on the Hillside Ave. side).

For immediate technology needs, please contact Support at 301-259-1510, M-F, 8 AM-3 PM.

Women's History Month

As I mentioned last week, we are delighted to be celebrating Women's History Month. Our schools have lots of creative activities planned including Nishuane first graders working on writing assignments that focus on interviewing notable women in their life, Bradford students hearing from the first African

American principal ballet dancer Misty Copeland read from her book “Bunheads,” Hillside fifth graders being treated to a presentation from NASA engineer Elizabeth Duffy, and Glenfield students hearing from Katherine Moore, daughter of NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson, depicted in the film “Hidden Figures.” Stay tuned for highlights on our website at the end of the month.

REMINDERS

Calling all Families - Your Application Matters

The district has an opportunity to apply for Federal and State funding and resources that can help us implement Pre-K education. Please submit a Free and Reduced lunch application. When applying for grants and funding, we must be able to produce free and reduced lunch statistics. **Please note that if your circumstances have changed, and you wish or need to be considered for assistance, please apply.** Again, your completed application is critical and will get us closer to applying for resources that will help our students.

Toni’s Kitchen Delivers

No family should ever go hungry. If you are experiencing hardship during these troubling times, please see the flyer (English/Spanish) for details.

Montclair Neighborhood Development Corp. (MNDC)

MNDC is hosting a virtual Career Development Institute and is accepting applications through March 31 for students ages 16-18. Please call **973-744-9094** for more information.

We recognize our Irish-American families as they celebrate their heritage this month and wish a happy St. Patrick’s Day to all next week. We are proud to celebrate an amazing cultural richness in Montclair and welcome the diversity it brings to our district. There is much to be learned from the cultures of the world, and many times it is through celebrating the customs and traditions of our neighbors that we are all brought closer together.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent