

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 21

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

May 14, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Middle Schools are open for in-person/hybrid instruction, and we are only days away from seeing our freshmen begin in-person. See [photos](#) for a glimpse of the first day for Middle Schools.

This past Wednesday, May 12 was **National School Nurse Day**. If there was ever a time to recognize our school nurses it is now. COVID-19 changed the way we work and view our colleagues in the school community. Our school nurses are not only essential workers, they are a vital part of the physical, emotional and educational well-being of our school district. Our certified school nurses have been in person in our school buildings this entire school year. They educated themselves in all aspects of COVID-19, provided virtual healthcare, made humanitarian calls to all families, attended meetings, assisted principals and custodians in safely preparing our buildings for re-entry and have been a sensible, calming resource throughout our district. During their off time, our nurses also served the Montclair community assisting with COVID testing and vaccinations at county sites and hospitals, working in emergency rooms, helping schedule vaccines, contact tracing, and providing translations, food, support and more. We are always proud of our school nurses but are especially appreciative of their wonderful accomplishments this school year under stressful circumstances.

Special Education Elementary Students

- All students in grades K-5, with an IEP, will begin in-person/hybrid learning, five days a week Monday, May 17.
- If your child receives transportation, the Transportation Department will adjust to accommodate the schedule five days a week.
- All Child Study Team members and Related Service providers will return to their assigned buildings Monday, May 17.
- All Related Service providers should adjust their schedules to maximize in-person therapies.

In-person/Hybrid for Middle Schools

We will provide in-person instruction on Wednesdays beginning the week of May 24. In addition:

- Our Child Study Teams and Related Service providers will return to their assigned buildings beginning Monday, May 17.
- All Special Education students who have an active IEP (resource room, in-class support, self-contained) will begin in-person/hybrid instruction five days a week Monday, May 24.

Details continue to be worked out for collapsing the scheduling to two rotation groups, and we project this to begin the week of May 24.

In-person/Hybrid for High School

High School freshmen will begin in-person/hybrid instruction Wednesday, May 19. Wednesdays are no longer virtual and will be included in the rotation for in-person learning. In addition:

- All High School LLD Self-Contained students and all 9th Grade Special Education students will return for in-person/hybrid instruction five days a week Wednesday, May 19.
- All High School Child Study Teams will return to their assigned buildings Wednesday, May 19.

We will announce the in-person/hybrid start date for sophomores on Wednesday, May 19.

As we are making adjustments, please follow our communications and watch for principal updates as to scheduling changes.

Reminder: On days your child is attending in-person, please complete the health screening form which is accessed through the Genesis Parent Portal.

Reminder: Opening September 2021

Schools will open for PreK-12 students on September 9, full time, five days a week. We are eager to begin the school year anew and welcome everyone to the buildings. See approved [2021-22 Calendar](#). We will follow guidance from the CDC, NJDOH, and Montclair Health Department at that time. Additionally, we will continue to conduct consent-based, pooled testing to monitor and address any positive cases of COVID-19 expediently.

Transportation

Since we just completed week one of in-person/hybrid instruction for Middle Schools, please check Genesis regularly for route updates and time changes. When changes are made that affect multiple stops, eblasts are sent using School Messenger. However, during these initial weeks, please continue to check.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)

The ESSER II fund is designed to provide districts with emergency relief funds to address the impact COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools. ESSER II is focused on helping school districts safely reopen schools and measure and effectively address significant learning loss.

The bulk of the grant funding will cover our technology one-to-one initiative, summer learning, after-school tutoring, parent academy, and social emotional learning for students and teachers. In the table below we provide a breakdown for how we will use these targeted funds.

Area	Amount
Technology: 1:1 Initiative	\$1,407,665
Mental Health for Staff & Students	\$ 45,000
Professional Development	\$ 45,000
Summer Learning Materials	\$ 35,000
Summer Learning	\$ 240,000
Saturday Arts Academy	\$ 10,328
Parent Academy	\$ 30,000
3 PM - 6 PM After-School Program	\$ 500,000
One-on-One Tutoring	\$ 25,000
Instructional Materials (Math and ELA)	\$ 100,000
School Security Needs	\$ 10,000

Pooled Testing for PreK-5

For those of you who have completed the consent forms in Genesis, we will continue our pooled testing. Please prepare your children by showing them this instructional [video](#). We are hopeful that this mitigation step will be a tool that will help us curtail the spread of the virus.

Cultural Responsiveness

Our Director of Humanities Marcos Vargas is working with the Montclair Art Museum to pilot a program for schools incorporating field trips and hands-on art-making lessons on the museum's upcoming 'Color Riot' exhibition. This exhibition celebrates individualism and experimentation in Navajo textiles, featuring more than 60 vivid, varied artworks from 1850-1930 and from 1995 to the present. The historical textiles are rooted in the

experience of Navajo people between 1863 and 1868, when thousands were imprisoned at Bosque Redondo in Fort Sumner, New Mexico then returned to their home on a reservation. During this time, weavers incorporated stylistic features of Hispanic textiles and began to work with bright aniline dyes and wool yarns mass-produced in Germantown, Philadelphia. The exhibition will open in September, and Montclair Public Schools hopes to include it as part of our culturally inclusive and responsive offerings.

Food Service

Meals will be available on Mondays and Thursdays for in-person students upon dismissal from the Elementary Schools. For those who are remote, parents/guardians can pick up meals on Mondays and Thursdays for one hour at any Elementary School starting one hour after school dismissal time. For those parents/guardians who cannot pick up meals at an Elementary School during the afternoon hours, please pick up meals at the High School on Mondays and Thursdays from 4 to 6 PM.

Meals are available at Middle Schools at dismissal for those in person and for remote students one hour after dismissal. For those parents who cannot pick up meals at Middle Schools, the High School will have them from 4 to 6 PM.

Important Information from Nursing Services

Vaccination Update

The FDA and CDC have approved and recommended the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for adolescents 12-15 years of age (previously approved for ages 16 and over). Please call your child's healthcare provider with any questions you may have.

Community

Montclair Scholarship Fund (MSF) will be holding a fundraiser on Saturday, May 15. [Shop and support local businesses](#) while helping MHS seniors with financial need achieve college success. A portion of the day's proceeds will go to MSF.

Members of our community will host a "Walk and Roll Parade" for Disability Pride this Saturday, May 15. The parade will assemble at Henningburg Field at 1 PM, off Chestnut Street on Midland Avenue, and participants walk and roll to Rand Park for speakers and music.

AAPI Montclair will host its first ever [Lantern Festival for Justice and Remembrance](#) at Edgemont Memorial Park, Friday, May 21, 7-9 PM (rain date: May 22), illuminating the park with over a thousand white paper lanterns as a memorial to all victims of racial violence and injustice.

Buzz Aldrin PTA has been selected to receive the New Jersey PTA Communications Award. Awards will be presented at the 2021 Virtual New Jersey PTA Leadership Convention on May 22.

REMINDERS

Technology

We continue to distribute technology to our families every **Tuesday from 9 AM to 12 PM and from 1 to 3 PM** at Hillside School (Entrance B on Hillside Ave. side). Please contact your child(ren's) school so a work order can be placed. Once the work order is placed, someone from the Technology Office will reach out to you and coordinate a date and time for pickup.

High School Statement regarding Jewish Heritage Month

The following statement was sent to high school families by Principal Freeman today.

On Monday, May 10, 2021 there was a post under Jewish American Heritage month in the Montclair High School (MHS) daily announcements highlighting Meir Kahane. Highlighting this person does not represent the contributions of the Jewish people to American life, and it is in fact offensive to the Jewish community. For doing this we apologize. This incident was not only a grievous mistake, but completely against the beliefs and fabric of the Montclair community and school district. The school district's policy on educational equity and anti-racism is clear in its denouncement of racism and biases and its upliftment and push towards equity and inclusivity.

Although I cannot comment on the details of confidential personnel matters, I can unequivocally state that I, along with Central Office Administration, are taking this matter seriously.

While many members of the community are inquiring as to next steps concerning this particular staff member, please be assured that the matter is being addressed in accordance with administrative code and disciplinary contractual guidelines.

As the building administrator, I am responding to this incident in a manner that is fitting and relative to the seriousness of this situation, taking into consideration the impact that it has had on our community.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Freeman

Board of Education meetings will be held using a hybrid format beginning May 17. We will have an in-person meeting at the George Inness Annex with three feet of social distancing and masks, and we will also use a virtual platform. Public comment will only be taken virtually. On May 17, our reorganization meeting, three new Board Members will be sworn in: Kathryn Weller-Demming, Eric Scherzer, and Crystal Hopkins. Additionally, we are delighted to be honoring our Governors' Educator of the Year Award recipients who will be joining us virtually that evening.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jonathan Ponds

Superintendent