

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Community Message SY 21-22 No. 13

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

January 21, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff,

I write to you with a heavy heart as I think about our Jewish brothers and sisters who are dealing with the recent terrorist incident at a synagogue in Texas where people were taken hostage, including the rabbi. No one should be anxious about going to a place of worship. This is not okay, we are in troubled times, and we all need to come together to make the world a better place. Let's continue our work in schools with cultural awareness, restorative justice, and platforms for students to express themselves and learn to treat each other with care, respect and civility.

The district looks forward to celebrating Chinese New Year. AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) Montclair will be hosting a Lunar New Year celebration on the grounds of the Montclair Art Museum from 12 to 3 PM on Saturday, February 12. This is a great time for our community to come together to share in the customs and history of our Asian families. Additionally, at this week's Board Meeting we heard from our AAPI students and families about adding the recognition of Chinese New Year to the school calendar. I am happy to support this recognition, and I propose that our school calendar reflects this as an official district holiday (day off) for students and staff whenever it falls on a weekday. To memorialize this, we will ask the Board to pass a resolution designating Lunar New Year as a holiday.

Pupil Services Publishes Newsletter

Learn about updates in the Department of Pupil Services in the first issue of its [seasonal newsletter](#). Here you'll find information on teacher collaboration, compensatory education, spring initiatives and more. The newsletter will be posted on the Pupil Services webpage and mailed directly to families of children with special needs by next week.

COVID Testing and Health Guidance Update

Rapid antigen testing from Medi Mobile of Livingston is available at the Annex Atrium, 141 Park St. with parking in

the rear on No. Fullerton on **Tuesdays and Fridays, 4 to 6 PM throughout the end of January and all of February.** This service has no out-of-pocket cost, but please remember to bring your insurance card and ID.

While the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) recently updated their K-12 guidance, we wanted you to understand that out of an abundance of caution and collaboration with our school physician, we will maintain the 10-day quarantine period until we are out of the high risk zone.

Masking

Masking is **mandated by the Governor's office** for K-12 schools as stipulated in [Executive Order 281](#). **Indoor masking will continue in our schools for all individuals including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.** Please be sure your children wear masks when boarding school buses.

Phase I Facility Upgrades

We are pleased to announce that Phase I facility upgrades are complete and consist of installing mechanical ventilation (HVAC) in 66 classrooms that did not previously have it. These classrooms were identified by PSA (our architects) and are operational. We thank Buildings and Grounds for its unwavering commitment to seeing this project through to the end.

ESSER III Funding

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) provides school districts with aid to address the impact COVID-19 has had on school budgets. Along with the initial ESSER Fund, in March 2021 the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund was formed. This additional level of funding is commonly known as ESSER III and enables districts to reopen and sustain the safe operations of schools. We are pleased that with this funding we have completed Phase I of our HVAC ventilation work. We have encumbered these funds as follows:

COVID Testing	\$287,302.40
Desk Shields/Sneeze Guards and Cleaning Products	\$66,800.23
HVAC Phase I Architect	\$155,500.00
HVAC Phase I Construction	\$1,697,000.00
TOTAL	\$2,206,652.63

The total ESSER III funds were \$5,074,892 and were allotted as follows:

Paras - \$180,000

Teachers - \$650,000

Benefits for the aforementioned staff - \$386,270

****Note: Money allocated in the ESSER III in the staffing areas (Paras, teachers, benefits), can also be allocated towards compensatory education.***

Instructional Supplies - \$50,000

HVAC - \$2,254,506

Extended Day Transportation - \$200,000

COVID Testing/Vaccinations - \$1,200,000

Desk Shields/Sneeze Guards/Cleaning Products - \$154,116

In closing, I assure you we haven't lost focus on our educational goals and at upcoming Board meetings, various departments will be presenting and providing highlights of their continued progress.

Have a great weekend!

Dr. Jonathan Ponds

Superintendent