



# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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**JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.**

*Superintendent of Schools*

Dear Families/Caregivers and Staff,

We are rapidly approaching September, and I wanted to provide you with an update on how and why we have come to formulate these next steps. This week all design teams met both individually and jointly to assess and construct our plans that will be submitted to the state for approval. Our goal is to create a safe reopening format that best meets the needs of all students, staff and families. Some of those needs were expressed in the survey data in which we found that 70% of our families prefer an in-person, hybrid model, 30% would like solely remote and approximately 25% said they would continue to use bussing.

### **Proposed Model**

Using this survey data to guide us and understanding that the safety and health of students, staff, and families are our top priorities, we designed a hybrid model of in-person and remote instruction for students when the 2020-21 school year begins in September. We are also offering a 100% remote option for those families that choose not to send their children to school. The hybrid model will consist of A and B Groups of students, that we will call the *Mounties* and the *Bulldogs*, allowing for safe numbers in schools for social distancing purposes. Additionally, school will be in session for a four-hour day of instruction with lunch available for grab and go at the end of the day. The schedule will work as follows:

- Mondays and Tuesdays the *Mounties* (Group A) will have in-person (at school) learning and the *Bulldogs* (Group B) will learn remotely.
- Wednesdays will be a full school day of remote learning and instruction.
- Thursdays and Fridays the *Mounties* (Group A) will learn remotely and the *Bulldogs* (Group B) will have in-person (at school) learning.
- Children in the same family will be assigned to the same group so that they will have the same rotating schedule.

### **Childcare/K-2 and Special Needs**

We are working with our partners to plan for childcare and the YMCA will continue to provide before- and after-care for our students. We are also exploring ways to use the YMCA for childcare and helping children with remote learning on Wednesdays as this is a day of full remote services. We continue to investigate how we can offer a full week of in-person learning for Grades K -2 and our students with special needs.

## **Collaboration**

This plan continues to be fluid as we watch the latest data and information from the Governor's Office and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The model we have outlined was created with parents, teachers, students, community partners, school board members, custodians, transportation, and administrators weighing in. We are particularly thankful for the collaboration and critical input of the Montclair Education Association and the Mayor's office as we continue to work together on the many details needed going forward.

## **Delivery of Instruction**

Online learning presents challenges, and we realize that instruction implemented this past spring will need to improve substantially. Every student and family deserve to be engaged and supported and this means ensuring every child has a device and internet connectivity along with remote instruction in a consistent, uniform manner. Rest assured that we are focusing on the critical core subject areas to ensure that all instruction is high-quality, rigorous, and meaningful. Our staff will be addressing the impact of learning loss during the pandemic to provide academic review for all students. Additionally, we are exploring creative ways for teaching in outdoor spaces and working with our partners to incorporate electives into the schedules.

We are keenly aware that a virtual environment cannot fully replace an engaging, active classroom; however, our teams are committed to building rigor in our remote learning, establishing a consistent platform for delivery of that instruction, and providing our teachers with high-quality professional development so that they can appropriately use the necessary remote tools.

## **Safety and Health**

The safety and health of students and staff will always be our overarching priorities. We are cleaning and sanitizing all buildings and classrooms and establishing procedures for how to take breaks safely during the day, use classroom supplies, build in handwashing time, and take temperatures before entering the school. Students and staff will be expected to wear masks and classrooms are set up to provide six feet of separation among desks. All of our safety protocols will be in alignment with the NJDOE and the Governor's Office guidance along with recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, the Montclair Health Department and our school physician.

## **MHS Interim Principal Announcement**

I am honored to announce that Ms. Terry Trigg-Scales has agreed to serve our district once again as its Interim High School Principal. Ms. Scales recently held this role in 2018. She has over 38 years' experience in our schools and rose through the ranks serving as teacher, assistant principal, principal, director of curriculum and finally as Assistant Superintendent for

the Department of Instruction until her retirement. She currently sits on the Board of Education in West Orange, is an educational consultant and a member of several county organizations. Please join me in welcoming Ms. Scales back to the district and Montclair High School.

*We understand this is a lot of information to absorb. Your feedback and insight are welcomed, and we will be sending another survey in August as we continue to reevaluate our plans.*

*This is a community-wide effort and to see this collaboration is both energizing and promising.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent