



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

22 VALLEY ROAD ~ MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042

WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US

JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

September 11, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Yesterday we virtually greeted nearly 6500 students on opening day for the new school year. It may have looked different than years past, but it didn't take away from the smiles and eagerness of the children who were ready to "meet" their teachers and classmates. At least they didn't have to bring umbrellas and boots on their first day as it was pouring in the morning. Thank you for sending in pictures for our [opening day story](#) on the website. The best part of my day was joining classes as a guest and meeting students and teachers who genuinely seemed so happy to be at school. Here are some comments I received from the community about the best part of their days:

As a quick note--both of my kids' classes are going really well this morning at MHS!! Thanks to everyone for all of their extraordinary work to pull this school year off.

From an elementary school parent:... said he had a great day! It's the most positive he's been in months. I'm so glad it started off on a good note.

We had a great introduction to Mrs. McKeon today! My son asked her if the class could dissect a frog, so she may have a challenging year.

From a parent to principal: I just wanted to tell you this morning you are doing a great job!!! Keep up the good work. Your calming demeanor is going to help many of us through this storm.

From a parent of a fifth grader: HUGE THANK YOU for an amazing start to 5th grade. We so appreciate how organized and well thought out these first two days went. The sound of ... giggling from his laptop while in class has made my day and warmed my heart.

Back-to-School Nights

Remember to sign in to Back-to-School Nights. Teachers will be sharing links for the events. They begin next week with Buzz Aldrin taking the first spot on September 15 and run through October 6. Principals have recorded an opening message for you which will be followed by live zoom sessions with your children's teachers.

Extracurricular Clubs and Activities

Clubs and activity advisors have been approved at the high school and middle school level. Advisors will be conducting online activities so that students stay connected with their peers and special interests.

Facilities

Our consultants are continuing with their assessment of the ventilation systems throughout the district. District staff have begun repairing/replacing systems based upon the recommendations of our consultant.

Screen Time

We received feedback regarding remote instruction and the increased amount of screen time for our youngest learners. Our building principals will be working with our teachers to adjust screen time to allow for synchronous and asynchronous learning. We hear you, and we thank you for the feedback.

Technology

Seesaw and Zoom platforms have been launched and used extensively during our first two days. We will provide ongoing professional development in all platforms as our teachers become well versed in their usage. The Technology Department is in the process of preparing additional devices for those families who have contacted their children's schools. Please remember to use the Technology Hotline at 301-259-1510 during the hours of 8 AM to 3 PM if you have any technology related questions.

Food Service

Montclair Public Schools will be participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Program, providing nutritionally balanced, free lunches to our students through December 2020. Beginning September 14, meals will be available for pickup Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. See [flyer](#) for details and pickup locations.

High School Counselors

All counselors have open office hours throughout the day. Links for sign ups have been sent to students and can be provided again, so please remind your children that this service is available to them. The counselors are eager to get to know your children and support them as they navigate the high school.

Athletics

Pre-season sports begin on Monday, September 14, for Girls Tennis, Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Soccer, Cheerleading, and Cross Country. Our coaches have done a great job with being flexible and communicating with their students and families about the fall 2020 season. They have strictly adhered to all health and safety protocols. Our fall season opens up on Thursday, October 1 with Boys Soccer playing at MKA and Girls Tennis playing at Verona High School. Field Hockey will host Millburn for their season opener on Friday, October 2 and Football will travel to Bloomfield. Cross Country and Girls Soccer will open their seasons on Saturday, October 3. The Mountie Athletic Department and our athletes and coaches are excited to represent our community this fall.

We want to give a **special shout out to the Girls Lacrosse team** to thank them for their donation which will be used to purchase a Chromebook for one of our families.

Our emphasis in these opening days was on providing live instruction, and this will continue during the entire remote period. Our teachers and administrators had a tremendous task to make this happen and they worked hard during professional development to learn new platforms and create lessons with fidelity that would engage our students. I appreciate everyone's commitment to making this experience fruitful. And while we still have to adjust and learn, each day will bring improvement. Additionally, I want to thank the parent community for your feedback and questions which were invaluable in creating our new pathways for learning.

As this day is one of remembrance for the brave and lost souls of 9/11, we always hope that we continue to care for one another as time is precious. Have an enjoyable and restful weekend. Please keep up your incredible energy and positivity as we head into a full week of learning. We are here to address any issues and concerns you may have going forward. Together we will get through this, and together we are stronger!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent

All Kids can Learn ~ All Kids are Special