



# 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*

August 21, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers, and Staff,

As you know, last week I made the very difficult decision to begin the 2020-2021 school year with fully remote instruction. We understand that our delivery of this instruction needs to be rigorous and engaging for our students and keep them energized to become active learners. Therefore, with the experience, knowledge and feedback we gained last spring, we developed a plan to provide our students with an engaging and challenging academic experience. The Department of Equity, Curriculum and Instruction designed a [Remote Learning Plan](#) with details about how instruction will look, scheduling, technology, and more. You will find sections for Special Education, the Developmental Learning Center (DLC), and ESL as well. Please take some time to review this plan in its entirety.

I would like to take this opportunity to answer your questions concerning the ventilation remediation and when students and staff may be able to return to our buildings for in-person instruction. First and foremost, my goal is to bring everyone back **safely** and as soon as possible. The consultants have completed their analysis of our ventilating systems throughout the district, and our district staff is working with them to remediate deficiencies. This work also includes selecting an air filtration system for areas that may require additional support to ensure the air quality in rooms is adequate.

We are currently working on short-term solutions that will provide sufficient ventilation to bring back students and staff as soon as possible. We then will continue with longer-term solutions during the holidays and throughout the year. Of course, all of our upgrades to the ventilation system will be formally submitted to the state and county as well as our expected date for return to buildings for approval. Rest assured that I will continue to update you weekly on our progress.

Please understand that while we are prepared for remote teaching and learning, we will also have a detailed hybrid plan in place so that there will be no interruption of services during the transition period to hybrid.

Below is additional information in areas on which we continue to focus based on your inquiries.

### **Choosing Remote or Hybrid Options**

If you received a survey today to choose between a fully remote or hybrid option (for when we are back in school), please disregard it. We will be issuing another survey in a few weeks when more information will be available for you to make a choice. We realize it is too early in the process to make an informed decision.

### **Start and End Times**

Each school will start and end at their regularly scheduled times; however, instruction will be spread out throughout those times. Grade levels will operate utilizing a schedule that is developmentally appropriate. For instance, breaks will be built in to avoid screen-time fatigue. For details please check the [Remote Learning Plan](#).

### **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken daily; please refer to [District Policy No. 5200](#) for details. If you have extenuating circumstances, please discuss them with your child's teacher.

### **Technology**

We are committed to ensuring that all children in our school system have access to computers and internet service. It is imperative for our students to have the tools they need for a successful online academic experience. Based on the recent survey results, we will be distributing devices at our self-service vestibule at Hillside School as follows:

**August 27 and 28 from 9 AM to 12 Noon and 1 to 5 PM, and**

**August 31 from 1 to 7 PM**

If you did **not** respond to the survey and need a device or internet service, email your child's school principal who will work with the Technology Department. You will then receive an email from the Technology Department when the device is ready for pick-up.

### **Childcare**

We have involved our community partners, particularly the YMCA of Montclair in our planning meetings for a return to school. We realize that many families will have to seek childcare solutions. The YMCA of Montclair will be offering families support with childcare during the remote learning period. They have plans for a full day of care with certified staff who will assist children in accessing online learning and will engage them in a variety of enrichment activities that include sports and outdoor play. A flyer with details and registration information can be found here: <https://www.montclairymca.org/lec/>.

Please note that childcare is not managed nor provided by the school district but we are happy to forward you information about resources from outside partners as it becomes available to us. These partners may have some flexibility around tuition, and we encourage you to inquire about this.

### **Food Service**

Please be reminded that the last day meals will be served is August 31. We are working on plans for distribution sites and hours of availability for meals for the 2020-2021 school year. Meal distribution will begin again on the first day of school which is September 10, 2020. I will provide updates as we move forward.

### **Health Concerns**

Even though we are opening remotely, I have received questions about how we will handle any positive cases once we are in the hybrid model. Our medical team, which includes our school physician, the Montclair Health Department and District Nursing Supervisor, will make final decisions about exclusions, re-entry and classroom/school closure due to positive cases of COVID-19 prior to the re-entry date. The

CDC/NJDOH guidelines are changing rapidly, and therefore we have decided to pause our decision making in order to implement the latest guidelines at the appropriate time. Our nurses will be fully certified in contact tracing and the Montclair Health Department will be leading the effort as it has been throughout this pandemic.

**Developmental Learning Center (DLC)**

The DLC will be opening remotely for all classes on September 10. The school day will consist of several short, 15-30 minute blocks of live virtual instruction followed by gross motor breaks to allow the students to move and minimize screen fatigue. Some activities that will be conducted live include: morning circle, literacy activities, math activities, art projects, and social-emotional lessons (i.e. share the news and show and tell). Activities will also be posted in a remote platform for families to complete offline. The instructional school day for all classes will run from 9 AM to 12 Noon daily and classroom teachers will be available for family collaboration in the afternoon.

*I thank you for your feedback and questions. If I have not yet responded to an email, please know I am working my way through each of them, and they are being discussed and used in our work sessions to help inform our decision-making. I remain hopeful that our remote plan, although a short-term setback, is not a setback in learning. We are focused on providing rigorous and meaningful instruction for all students, and we are determined to make this happen in our virtual classrooms.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent

*All Kids can Learn ~ All Kids are Special*