



# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**  
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**JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

September 18, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

The first full week of virtual teaching and learning has had its ups and downs. I understand that there were some technical glitches and that screen time seems challenging for the little ones. There simply is no perfect substitute for in-person learning. Please know we are working diligently to start our in-person model. In our in-person model, we will have measures in place to manage the contagion so that we may STAY open.

In the meantime, our first Curriculum Thursday is next week, and we will continue professional development (PD) so that teachers can share some of their best practices and have a chance to review what they learned in their initial PD before the start of school. We will continue to provide live teaching, and use virtual break out rooms to enhance student collaboration. One thing is certain our teaching pedagogy will continue to evolve as we adapt to the virtual learning spaces.

We are excited to offer our new *Parent and Community University* which begins next week. Please read below for more details on that and other topics.

## **Parent and Community University**

We are pleased to announce that the district will be facilitating a series of **virtual** Parent & Community workshops at our brand new *Parent and Community University*. These workshops are designed specifically for our parents and community members to learn more about how our children are using Google tools during their remote learning. Each day will focus on a particular grade level group; but you may attend any session throughout the week when it is offered. This new resource will begin the week of September 21.

Each day will consist of two, one-hour sessions dedicated to your children's grade level. Monday through Thursday will be from 5 to 7 PM and Friday, will consist of two sessions starting from 10 to 11AM and from 11 to 12 PM. Presenters will be going over topics such as : Google Classroom, Google G Suite for Education, Seesaw and Zoom. For a complete list of topics, please see the [menu](#). Workshops are open to all Montclair Public School families and community members. In order to attend, you simply click on the link next to the corresponding topic that interests you on the given date and time. Each session is limited to 250 participants.

## **Health and Wellness**

Coming soon we will have a health and wellness component added to our *Parent and Community University*. The Healthy Minds committee has been working on mental health programming and uploading videos on topics such as mindfulness, structuring your child's day while remote learning, etc

We also hope to offer afternoon virtual clubs for students of all ages. Additionally, we want to ensure that families have the help they need. Our nurses will be making humanitarian phone calls next week checking in to see how you are doing and how we can help.

### **K-2 Students**

We have received the feedback from families who are concerned about the amount of screen time for our youngest learners. We met with all building leaders and they are in the process of revising the daily schedule to include less screen time. We will send an update to K-2 families by the middle of next week. We heard all of you and we appreciate the feedback and ask you to please continue to let us know of your concerns.

### **Special Education**

Director of Pupil Services Tom Santagato and his team have presented a plan based on parent feedback for our most vulnerable students. Teachers who are participating in the Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) Orton-Gillingham Program will begin working with students from Montclair in the coming weeks. Parents of potential students will receive notification by the end of next week. Virtual supplementary Orton-Gillingham instruction will be provided on Wednesday's to include individual sessions starting at 4:15 and 5:15 pm. Each selected student will have 1:1 instruction with a Montclair teacher and oversight with an FDU Professor.

The district is proud to announce a partnership with Rutgers University Professor, Dr. Judith Harrison. Dr. Harrison comes highly regarded as an advocate of inclusion and will seek out our district trailblazers who also have the passion for inclusive educational opportunities. Dr. Harrison will pilot a program and foster a relationship with a district coalition to support all students as well as students with disabilities.

### **Facilities**

Our consultants are continuing with their assessment of the ventilation systems throughout the district. For schools that have had assessments completed, we have begun our repairs to the ventilation systems and window repairs are being scheduled, where necessary. In preparation for schools opening the following equipment has been purchased: MP 2 SafeCheck Walkthrough Body Temperatures; Enviroklenz U Model Air Purifiers and Rapid Curis Fogger. In addition to the equipment we have purchased cleaning supplies, hand sanitizers, hand foaming soap and various PPE supplies for the staff and students.

### **Technology**

The Department of Technology continues to distribute devices to families in need. Please contact your children's school if you are in need. For immediate technology assistance, please use our Technology Hotline by calling 301-259-1510. *If no one answers the phone, please leave a message and include the student's name, a number to contact you at, and what the issue is that you are experiencing. We will be monitoring this number Monday through Friday from 8 am to 3 pm. You may also register a need by putting in a Remote Learning Support ticket using [Incident IQ](#) located under the "QUICK LINKS" section on our district homepage.*

**Community Resource**

The [Montclair Art Museum](#) is open for business and is offering free admission to families who qualify for SNAP benefits. Tickets need to be purchased online through the art museum's website or send an email to [esander@montclairartmuseum.org](mailto:esander@montclairartmuseum.org).

*To our families celebrating Rosh Hashanah beginning today at sundown we wish you a healthy and happy new year! The district proudly recognizes Hispanic Heritage Month which runs from September 15 through October 15. Our Spanish teachers will be commemorating this month with projects and activities that pay tribute to the generations of Hispanic Americans who have enriched our society. On Monday evening we will be swearing in a new Board of Education member, Ms. Allison Silverstein. Ms. Silverstein is a parent in the district, a member of SEPAC, and we look forward to her contributions on the Board.*

*Remember to reach out to your teachers and principals as your first line of communication if you have any concerns about your children's daily school work. They are here to help you not only with academics but also in the social emotional aspects of learning.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent

*All Kids can Learn ~ All Kids are Special*