

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 15

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

March 26, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

District administrators and MEA leadership did final walkthroughs this week, and we are eagerly awaiting in-person learning for PreK-5 students in just a couple of weeks. We know this will be an adjustment but it's also an exciting new beginning. You may have heard new CDC guidance allowing a three-foot distance for students in classrooms. We will maintain six-foot distancing until we are in-person and can reevaluate at that time. We will always be monitoring our progress as new guidance is reported and as we collect our own data.

Our schools continue to think outside the classroom with social-emotional and cultural activities for students and families. This Sunday Nishuane will be holding a Virtual Health & Wellness Fair for their families including sessions focused on mental and physical health and healthy eating. Montclair High School's Student Coalition held a Mental Health Spirit Week featuring mindfulness, movement, and a variety of mental health activities to celebrate everyone's perseverance through the pandemic. On the cultural side, Nishuane had a SNAPtastic Celebration where students in related arts classes created projects that embraced the diversity of its school community. See their [virtual showcase](#).

There is much to celebrate in March, and in honor of **Women's History Month**, Montclair High School Vice Principal Reginald Clark spoke with the officers of the school's chapter of the National Organization for Women, advised by Shana Stein and Anne Baney. "The session was quite encouraging as I listened to the passion of these young women leaders of MHS, Lucy Maguire '21, Maggie Borgen '21, Meliz Kurtulus '21, and Maggie Greenberg '22," said Clark. Watch the [video](#). Activities continue throughout the month such as a virtual field trip to the Harriet Tubman Museum in Cape May and various classroom lessons about historical and present day women role models. As this is also **Music in our Schools Month**, I'd like to give a shout out to our music teachers who have been resourceful and

creative all year, producing many virtual concerts giving our students the opportunity to perform even during these challenging times!

This past Sunday was **World Down Syndrome Day** which is marked each year on **March 21**. The **21st day of March** (the 3rd month of the year) was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the **21st** chromosome which causes **Down syndrome**. We celebrate all children and will always advocate for acceptance and inclusion.

Please see district updates below:

In-Person Instruction for PreK-5

Please be sure to review your principals' newsletters for details regarding the start of hybrid instruction. As a reminder, **complete the health and wellness contract in Parent Access/Genesis if your child will be participating in hybrid instruction.**

In-Person Instruction for Middle Schools and High School

The District and the MEA are working on a joint reopening committee and anticipate a release of dates for in-person instruction in the coming weeks.

Pupil Services

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is hosting a meeting with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for all parents of students with special needs on Monday, **March 29 at 6:30 PM**. Please see the district calendar for a link to the meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting Pupil Services Director Tom Santagato will provide a Q&A for parents.

Transportation

General Education students K-5 may view their bus routes in Genesis effective Friday, **March 26**. Please note they may be subject to change prior to the start of school. We ask that all families regularly check Genesis each morning as it updates daily, and please report any issue to the Transportation Office, [Transportation Manager Kevin Palmer](#) and/or [Secretary Connie Mattison](#), so that it may be corrected prior to opening.

Special Education families PreK-5 will be notified about their transportation service directly from the bus company by **April 2**. We ask that all families who do not receive word by that date contact the **Transportation Office at 973-509-4055 or email** (see above) so that we may address this prior to opening.

Vaccinations for Staff

The Mountainside vaccination administration has closed for staff and those who registered should have received an appointment time. Please note that appointments are emailed through a Xerox scan to

your Montclair.k12.nj.us account. If you did not register and still want or need a vaccine, please be sure to go to essexcovid.org.

Budget School Year 2021-22

In preparation of the adoption of the Budget on April 5, we invite you to [view the presentation](#) given at the Board of School Estimate meeting on March 22. We are building a budget to sustain us for the future so that students will have the resources and programming they need to succeed. We are utilizing funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund to enhance our mental health, acceleration, and summer programming offerings before we utilize the operating budget. We also expect these funds to support a 1:1 Chromebook initiative, so students have the same access and opportunities through the resources of technology and are prepared to compete in the digital world. We invite you to join us at our next Board of School Estimate meeting **March 29, 7:30 PM**. The link will be on the front page of the website the day of the meeting.

REMINDERS

Technology

Please contact your children's principal if they need a device. We continue to distribute devices every Tuesday from 9 AM to 12 PM and 1 PM to 3 PM at Hillside School (Entrance B, Red Door on the Hillside Ave. side). For immediate technology needs, please contact Support at **301-259-1510, M-F, 8 AM-3 PM**.

YMCA Before- and After-Care

When in-person instruction opens, the YMCA will be offering families of children in grades K-8 before- and after-care. Please [see the flyer](#) for details and registration information.

The district grieves, along with the rest of the country, for the victims of the senseless act of violence at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado this week. Our flags will be flying at half-staff through sunset on March 27 as the nation comes together to mourn.

Wishing our families celebrating the start of Passover a joyous observance of the holiday. We can all take these early spring days to reflect on social justice, freedom and new beginnings.

Enjoy the weekend!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent