

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 16

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

April 1, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

As I stated in my March Message No. 14, the District condemns the hate, discrimination and violence against Asian Americans. We will always stand in solidarity with the Asian community, and remain a District committed to diversity and anti-racism. Standing for what is right and teaching our students the evils of discrimination in any form are part of our core beliefs and values.

Along with some warmer weather, spring break is here. Please take some time to relax with family and friends as we soon will be welcoming our PreK-5 students and teachers to the buildings. Be sure to read your principals' bulletins which will have pertinent information about the PreK-5 schedules and remember to fill out the health and safety contract in Genesis if you have children who will be in-person.

I enjoy hearing good news about our school communities coming together whether it be for a special cause or to interact and get to know one another. Here's an example of an activity from Watchung School designed to spark students' interest in reading, something I strongly encourage. Recently families were asked to donate their gently used books for grades K-5, plus picture books and early middle school books. With close to 1,000 collected, staff and parent volunteers set up pickups for students to grab and go something to read over spring break. Extra books will be added to classroom libraries and donated to those in our community and surrounding communities who are in need.

Last week, the Renaissance 6th Grade Team hosted its first *6th Grade Curriculum Night*. Parents and caregivers had an evening of walking in the shoes of their 6th graders by engaging in a virtual field trip and participating in games and activities related to ELA, math, science, and social studies. A special shout out to 6th grade parents Margo Gardner for her first-place win in the Kahoot review game, followed by Leah Wolchok in second place and Judith Grodner in third.

Please see district updates below:

In-Person Instruction for Middle Schools and High School

We will release a date for in-person instruction at the Middle Schools and High School once we open our PreK-5 schools. I appreciate your patience during this time. The High School released its [hybrid plan](#) on Tuesday of this week and all **requests for High School changes from virtual to hybrid are due by April 2. To request a change from virtual to hybrid for Middle School, please contact your child's principal by April 5.**

Please note that if you have selected hybrid for your child and wish to change to all virtual, you may do so at any time. Be sure to read your principals' bulletins for details at your particular school.

Equity, Curriculum & Instruction

The Montclair Public School District Equity Team (DET) is developing its committee and seeking unique voices and perspectives to ensure diversity of ideas and solutions. This group will advise District leadership on equity issues affecting student achievement and success, ongoing work toward the District's equity goals, and continuous school growth efforts. Anyone interested in being a part of the DET should complete and submit the [MPS District Equity Team Membership](#) by 5 pm on **Friday, April 16**. The DET leadership welcomes alumni, parents, guardians, educators, and community organizations to apply. New members are asked to commit through the end of June 2023.

The New Jersey Department of Education announced that the **New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA)** will be administered to students this spring. See [letter](#) for details, testing window and test refusal.

Budget School Year 2021-22

The Board of School Estimate meeting held **March 29, 7:30 PM** can be viewed on our [website](#). Final adoption of the budget will take place on April 5 at 7:30 PM and a link to join the meeting will be posted to the homepage of the website that day. We are excited to have developed a budget that is fiscally sound and addresses the instructional needs of our students with extra supports for addressing expanded and accelerated learning.

The Giblin Report

Last month, I was invited to appear on Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin's [The Giblin Report](#). Assemblyman Giblin represents the 34th legislative district. During the interview, I provided an overview of the Montclair Public Schools and answered questions regarding the return to in-person/hybrid school, staff vaccinations, federal assistance, budgeting, enrichment/acceleration programs and more.

REMINDERS

Transportation

General Education students K-5 may view their bus routes in Genesis. Please note they may be subject to change prior to the start of school. We ask that all families regularly check Genesis 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.

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.

Travel Guidance

The District will be following the [guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and the New Jersey Department of Health in relation to travel to and from New Jersey. Please be sure to review this as we put safety and health first for all.

If you're looking for activities for and with your children, please remember to regularly check our [Digital Backpack](#), where you'll find a variety of after-school, enrichment and family programs.

Wishing our families celebrating Easter a joyous holiday!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent