

# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

22 VALLEY ROAD ~ MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042

[WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US](http://WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US)

PHONE: 973-509-4020 FAX: 973-509-0586



---

### Superintendent of Schools

*Weekly Community Message No. 20*

**Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.**

May 7, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

It's been a very challenging and complicated year. We are looking forward to a return to normalcy in the fall. In the meantime, during the final month and half, we have prepared a plan to return all students on all grade levels as quickly as possible. We redesigned scheduling and are following the distancing guidelines set forth by the CDC. The following information outlines our plans in general terms. Detailed scheduling information will be provided by principals.

#### **In-person/Hybrid for PreK-5**

Distancing parameters will be reduced to three feet as of May 17. Resource Room students will attend five days a week for pull out and inclusion with general education class instruction at this time. Related Services for students and the CST staff will be in-person five days a week beginning May 17. The CDC guidance requires teachers to keep a distance of six feet from students. When children are having snacks inside because of inclement weather, we will aim for 10 feet of distance.

#### **In-person/Hybrid for Middle Schools**

We are now using three feet distancing beginning May 10. Three rotation groups will be in effect the first week; however, we are working on the details to collapse to two rotation groups. We are planning for in-person instruction for all Resource Room students, in-person Related Services and CST staff to begin May 17, four days a week and moving to five days on May 24. Our Buildings and Grounds team will be cleaning and sanitizing on a regular basis and we are moving to in-person Wednesdays on May 24.

#### **In-person/Hybrid for High School**

The plan is to have High School students begin in-person/hybrid learning before the year is out. We will bring our freshmen back first and our Buildings and Grounds team is preparing the George Inness Annex. On Monday afternoon we will send out the start date for in-person freshmen. Our plan is to open quickly but safely. Please stay tuned for information on start dates for upperclassmen.

***As we are making adjustments, please follow our communications and watch for principal updates as to scheduling changes.***

***Reminder:*** *On days your child is attending in-person, please complete the health screening form which is accessed through the Genesis Parent Portal.*

### **Opening September 2021**

Our goal is to have all grades PreK-12 in-person, full time, five days a week when schools open in September. We are eager to begin the school year anew and welcome everyone to the buildings. The [2021-22 Calendar](#) was approved at the Board Meeting this Wednesday and our first day of school for students is September 9.

We will follow guidance from the CDC, NJDOH, and Montclair Health Department at that time. Additionally, we will continue to conduct consent-based, pooled testing to monitor and address any positive cases of COVID-19 expediently.

### **Thank You MPS Team**

This week I would be remiss if I didn't extend thanks and appreciation to our entire Buildings and Grounds team who has been doing a fantastic job working in the buildings night and day and addressing all concerns. I also thank the Montclair Education Association leadership for taking the time to walk buildings with administration. This time consuming task sometimes means nights and weekends. Even our principals have been working on weekends to ensure a smooth transition to in-person. I thank them for their support and tireless energy as we strive to open our buildings.

### **Update on Complaint**

I also want to address the complaint the district received involving Buildings and Grounds. Please know we are taking it very seriously and all allegations will be investigated. Due to the nature of the complaint, an outside entity will lead this work.

### **Meet our Newly Appointed Administrators**

At the May 5 Board of Education meeting the following appointments were approved:

- Frances Aboushi - Principal at Bradford, effective May 6 and supporting Glenfield throughout May
- Mike Chiles - Interim Assistant Principal at Glenfield, effective May 6
- Major Jennings - Principal at Buzz, effective August 1
- Nisha Gandhi - Assistant Principal at Buzz, effective July 1
- Jill McLaughlin - Director Elementary Education, effective July 1
- Frank Sedita - Acting Principal at Nishuane, effective July 1

The district will conduct a comprehensive search for a Renaissance principal who will uphold the ideals of the school and the district. We are committed to ensuring a smooth transition of leadership with all of our new appointments and look forward to a successful new school year.

### **Pooled Testing for PreK-5**

Pooled testing was completed in all elementary schools with second grade Mountie cohorts on Tuesday and Bulldog cohorts on Thursday. Students were cooperative, independent and self-swabbed. Thank you to staff who were ready for the nurse testing team and helpful throughout the process. Please prepare your children by showing them this instructional [video](#). We are hopeful that this mitigation step will be a tool that will help us curtail the spread of the virus.

### **District Equity Team**

Thank you to all who applied to be part of the District Equity Team. We received more than 100 applications that are currently being reviewed. All applicants will be notified no later than Friday, May 14.

### **Food Service**

Meals will be available on Mondays and Thursdays for in-person students upon dismissal from the Elementary Schools. For those who are remote, parents/guardians can pick up meals on Mondays and Thursdays for one hour at any Elementary School starting one hour after school dismissal time. For those parents/guardians who cannot pick up meals at an Elementary School during the afternoon hours, please pick up meals at the High School on Mondays and Thursdays from 4 to 6 PM.

Next week food distribution begins for Middle Schools. Meals will be available at Middle Schools at dismissal for those in person and for remote students one hour after dismissal. For those parents who cannot pick up meals at Middle Schools, the High School will have them from 4 to 6 PM.

### **Important Information and Reminders from Nursing Services**

**Medical Forms:** Elementary, Middle and High School: Medication and medication forms, as well as Action Plans (doctor's orders) for health conditions, must be delivered to the nurse prior to your child's return in-person. Please contact your child's school as soon as possible to make arrangements.

**Please note:** There are no changes or grace periods to NJ Immunization Laws due to COVID-19. All immunizations must be up-to-date and submitted to your child's school nurse.

New Jersey Administrative Code requires all children entering Grade 6 in September 2021 be in compliance with the following vaccinations:

#### **Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis Vaccine**

All incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who have had their 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, are required to have a booster dose of the Tdap vaccine prior to September 1, 2021.

#### **Meningococcal Vaccine**

All incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who have had their 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, must have one dose of Meningococcal vaccine prior to September 1, 2021. Vaccines given prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> birthday will not be accepted.

Students with birthdates of August 1 - December 31 must submit documentation of receiving these immunizations within 30 days of their 11<sup>th</sup> birthday (Send to Middle School Nurse).

**Failure to submit documentation of immunizations may result in exclusion from the first day of school in September 2021.**

All documentation should be sent to your child's elementary school nurse as soon as your child has received booster shots. Please keep a copy of these immunizations for your records.

### **May Recognitions**

We acknowledge Jewish American Heritage Month and pay tribute to the generations of Jewish Americans who helped form the fabric of American history, culture and society. As a district we encourage our staff and students to be sensitive to all cultures as it is in the blend of cultures that we learn to live in harmony. During this annual celebration, we recognize the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. Learn [more](#).

Counselors continue to offer guidance and support to help students who are displaying signs that they are experiencing social emotional stress. It is fitting that we recognize [Mental Health Awareness Month](#) which began in the United States in 1949 and was started by the [Mental Health America](#) (MHA) organization (then known as the National Association for Mental Health). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of people of all ages. Now, more than ever, it is critical to reduce the stigma around mental health struggles, because that stigma often prevents individuals from seeking help. We encourage anyone experiencing mental health struggles to ask for support.

We continue to celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. In Nishuane's [virtual library](#) one can find books showcasing it. Also view a [lesson from Nishuane](#) on AAPI geography and traditions.

### **REMINDERS**

#### **Technology**

We continue to distribute technology to our families every **Tuesday from 9 AM to 12 PM and from 1 to 3 PM** at Hillside School (Entrance B on Hillside Ave. side). Please contact your child(ren's) school so a work order can be placed. Once the work order is placed, someone from the Technology Office will reach out to you and coordinate a date and time for pickup.

*To everyone celebrating Mother's Day, I wish you a joyous weekend and a wonderful, special day!*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent