

# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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### Superintendent of Schools

*Weekly Community Message No. 4*

**Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.**

January 8, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Happy New Year! I hope you all enjoyed a healthy and restful winter break and that you are rejuvenated and ready to take on 2021! We, here at the district, are ready and eager to keep on track with our January 25 hybrid opening in a safe way for all. Rest assured we understand that every change brings with it new challenges and together we will move the district forward and meet our goals.

Teachers are scheduled to return to their schools and classrooms January 19 in order to prepare for the new hybrid format. This includes training on dual modality and essential Professional Development. January 19 and 22 will be asynchronous learning for students so that teachers can fully prepare their classrooms and take part in necessary training.

A few updates follow:

- **Health and Wellness**

The New Jersey Department of Health issued new guidance yesterday regarding students who may present with any major or minor symptom of COVID. If a child goes to the nurse's office with a symptom of COVID, they must be sent home and cannot return to school until a negative COVID test result is submitted or they have had 10 days of quarantine. This may result in more calls home and we wanted you to be aware. As always, as the guidance changes quite often, we will keep you updated.

- **Contract in Genesis**

For students returning to the classroom for hybrid learning, families must complete the COVID-19 health and wellness contract in Genesis. In addition, please make sure your child's required health records have been submitted to the school nurse.

### **Instructions from the Nursing Office**

In anticipation of our hybrid opening, our school nurses have asked that we communicate a few instructions for parents/caregivers. Please email the nurse in your child's school if:

- Your child has recently tested positive for COVID-19
- Household members of students returning to hybrid have recently tested positive for COVID-19
- Your child is in quarantine due to an exposure to COVID-19
- Your child has or will travel out of state or country within 14 days of re-entry (exception being New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware)

- **Food Service**

Please note that additional meals will be distributed on January 13 because the district is closed on January 18 in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Beginning January 25, on Mondays and Thursdays meals will be distributed at all elementary schools beginning 30 minutes after school dismissal for a period of one hour for students who are remote. Students who attend in-person can pick up meals upon dismissal from school on Mondays and Thursdays. Middle School and High School students can pick up meals at any elementary school until they return to in-person on Mondays and Thursdays as aforementioned. Food service is available for every child regardless of free and reduced meal status.

- **Special Education**

The schedule for Special Education students PreK-5 when we begin hybrid instruction will be as follows:

- Classified students who receive Resource Room or In Class Support will attend school according to their designated cohort, Mounties or Bulldogs. They will follow the hybrid plan.
- Paraprofessionals attend in person when students are in the buildings and provide virtual support when students are home.
- Self-Contained students in grades 6-12 will not begin in-person instruction until February 8.

- **Student Accomplishments**

- Claire Manning, our National Girls and Women in Sports award winner, was invited to play in the High School All American soccer game in St. Louis, MO the weekend of May 27-29.
- Gage Hammond, sophomore kicker on our football team, was invited to a national showcase to compete against high school kickers from around the country. Gage competed in two tournaments in Texas and West Virginia that led to this invitation and he will compete against the top freshman and sophomore high school kickers in the country.
- MHS senior Ava Agostinelli was the first place winner in the Pulitzer Center's Local Letters for Global Change. She is a member of the high school's Center for Social Justice. Read her [winning entry](#).

- Two groups of high school students have been spending their time on [philanthropic efforts](#) for the community.
- **Mental Health Support and Resources**  
If you, your child, or someone you know right now is feeling overwhelmed, you are not alone. The district has access to resources, informational pieces, and counseling services to meet social and emotional needs. This pandemic has been an emotional roller coaster, and we want you to know that we are here for you and want to support you. If you or a loved one is struggling, please know **we want you to reach out** to your child's teacher, principal, counselor, or me. Additionally, the following places on our website, [Counseling Corner](#) or [Community Resource Guide](#), have a host of resources including hotlines, local health agencies, educational materials, articles, video support and more. However, **please remember we are only an email or phone call away.**
- **Technology**  
The Technology Department is asking for all families who are using personal devices to utilize their Google Chrome Browser when participating in virtual learning. Our district has invested in many online tools and various applications that work best with the Chrome browser.

Please utilize our technology support line (301-259-1510) should you require any assistance. Lastly, please contact your child's building administrator if you are in need of a device.

*While watching the news unfold in our country this week, it was clear now more than ever, the importance of civil discourse. Let us hope that while we may disagree, we are not disagreeable. These moments of unrest, while unsettling, provide us as educators, parents and caregivers an opportunity to create an environment for our young people where they feel supported. This is a time for us as caregivers to work with our young people to teach them strategies to process their emotions and express viewpoints in appropriate ways. Our principals and counselors have been provided with a list of resources to use to guide lessons related to the current conditions.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent

