

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 5

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

January 15, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Please note that our in-person hybrid plan is beginning for PreK-5 on January 25. Students in grades 6-12 will follow with their hybrid, in-person schedule on February 8. We continue to prepare our staff and schools for a safe return to in-person, hybrid learning. Our Engineering Consultants have inspected and approved all modifications to our ventilation systems. Also in time for the January 25 in-person teaching and learning our K-5 classrooms have been outfitted with technology to support the hybrid model. All K-5 schools open at their regularly scheduled start times and are in session for four hours. We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back.

Please see the scheduling details for when we return to the buildings.

PreK

PreK students who have chosen in-person instruction are scheduled to begin January 25. They will attend school five days a week from **9:15 AM - 12:15 PM**. The remote option will also follow that same schedule. If you have any questions, please refer to the [DLC handbook](#).

Grades K-5

Students begin in-person, hybrid instruction on **January 25**. Teachers will return to the buildings on **January 19** and will begin their lessons using the **hybrid schedule** even though your children will **remain remote until January 25**. On **January 19 and January 22 there will be asynchronous** learning as the teachers are in Professional Development (PD) and setting up their classrooms. There will be **no afternoon teacher office hours from January 19-22**, as teachers will be continuing PD sessions and setting up classrooms. **Please remember, your children will follow their hybrid, Mountie/Bulldog schedules the week of January 19**. These hybrid schedules have been sent to you by your principals and/or teachers.

Grades 6-12

Students begin in-person, hybrid instruction on **February 8**. Teachers will return to the buildings on **February 1** and will begin their lessons using the **hybrid schedule** even though your children will

remain remote until February 8. On **February 1 and February 5 there will be asynchronous** learning as the teachers are in Professional Development (PD) and setting up their classrooms. There will be **no afternoon teacher office hours from February 1-5** as teachers will participate in PD and continue to prepare their classrooms. **Please remember your children will follow their hybrid, Mountie/Bulldog schedules the week of February 1.**

Special Education

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

- All 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.
- PreK students attend five days a week from 9:15 AM - 12:15 PM.
- Please note a change for Paraprofessionals. All paraprofessionals are required to be in the building for in-person or remote instruction either assisting students who are in-person or those who are remote.
- Students in grades 6-12 will not begin in-person instruction until February 8 following the hybrid schedule which is four days a week. Wednesdays are fully remote.
- Self-contained students in grades 6-12 will follow the hybrid schedule four days a week. Wednesdays are fully remote.

A few updates follow:

- **Transportation Scheduling:**

Starting Tuesday, January 19, families of students in grades PreK-5 will be able to check their busing assignment in Genesis. Please understand that there may be extenuating circumstances which may result in minor adjustments between now and the start of hybrid learning on January 25. Due to this, we ask that you check back daily to remain informed and to report any issues that may exist. The sooner we are notified of issues, the sooner we can make adjustments to ensure a smooth transportation service beginning January 25. Please call our Transportation Office at 973-509-4062 with any questions.

Busing Policy During Hybrid:

We will be taking necessary precautions to ensure the safety of students, bus and school staff alike. Please understand masks are to be worn at all times during bus transportation. Bus staff will not permit students to board without a proper mask. Neck gaiters do not qualify as masks, as they are only single ply and not deemed to adequately block the spread of potential pathogens. Due to the potential for students not boarding a bus for not wearing a mask, we ask that a parent or guardian be present for any child who would not be capable of returning home unattended.

- **Health and Wellness**

- **Contract in Genesis**

- For students returning to the classroom for hybrid learning, families **must complete** the COVID-19 health and wellness contract in Genesis. If these contracts are not completed, your child will remain virtual. If you are having trouble accessing or filling out the contract, please send an email to Parent Access. In addition, please make sure your child's required health records have been submitted to the school nurse.

- **Daily Health Screening**

- A daily health screening form will need to be completed by all students returning to the buildings. The screening is for a basic review of any COVID-like symptoms to ensure that students are safe to come to school. The daily screening form will be located in Genesis and live on Tuesday so that it is ready to use beginning January 25. If you have questions regarding accessing these forms, please email Parent Access.

- **Instructions from the Nursing Office**

- In anticipation of our hybrid opening, our district nursing office has created a [chart](#) to provide information on how to proceed if symptoms or other scenarios arise due to COVID-19. Please review this chart and 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
 - Guidelines for out of state (exceptions: NY, CT, DE, and PA) have changed. Students and staff will be required to quarantine for **10 days** following return to New Jersey. Testing is not required, and quarantine time will not be reduced due to a negative test.

- **Food Service**

- The next meal distribution is Wednesday, January 20. 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.

- **Athletics**

- Winter sports have begun. Teams are practicing, scrimmaging, and competing following safety and health guidelines. Please keep in mind there are **no** spectators allowed at any of our winter sports events. We will be live streaming our varsity boys and girls basketball games and the link will be updated on our Montclair Public Schools webpage under the *Parents* tab - [MHS Live Streaming](#).

- **Student Accomplishments**

Due to COVID-19 our fall sports teams could not play for divisional championships. The league decided to use its season records to designate division champions and the following teams were awarded SEC Division Championships:

- Girls Cross Country
- Girls Soccer
- Boys Soccer

Several MHS Model United Nations Team members who competed at the virtual Connect Model UN Conference were awarded distinctions. Students from all over the country debated in a simulated United Nations setting. They wrote position papers in advance of the conference, then worked together to write and debate resolutions.

Recognized students:

- Best Delegate: Juniper Shelley
- Distinguished Delegate: Miles Quarterman
- Outstanding Delegate: Caleb Levine
- Best Position Paper: Lucy Solomon and Palmer Holland
- Most Improved: Dominik Bondy

Our Board of Education student representative Genesis Whitlock is offering a weekly online [Zoom chat](#) every Sunday at 6 pm for participants to discuss and share what's happening in the school district and how we can support each other through this difficult time.

- **Technology**

Reminder: The Technology Department is asking 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 call 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.

- **District Celebrates and Honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., January 18**

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the district will be closed on Monday, January 18. Our schools will be holding a myriad of activities and celebrations virtually which include read alouds, letter writing, days of service with a new twist, flip grid videos, service components, and more. Please check our website for a wrap-up article at the end of the month.

We are excited to share that the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Scholarship Fund breakfast celebrating his life and legacy will take place virtually, on TV34 on **January 18 at 8 AM**. If you are not able to watch live, it will be posted to the [TV34 YouTube Channel](#). For 32 years the Scholarship Fund has awarded scholarships and financial support to 153 students. Some of the

keynotes will be given by former recipients who will share their incredible success stories. If you wish to contribute to the Scholarship Fund see the information in our [Digital Backpack](#).

- **Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action**

As you know our calendar now recognizes Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action the first week in February. This is a national coalition organized for racial justice in education that systematically examines injustices that exist at the intersections of race, class, and gender. We will be covering activities throughout our schools in a story on our website as well as a compilation of highlights of the inspirational and educational lessons and projects celebrating February's Black History Month.

I also wanted to share that our counselors and Restorative Justice Teachers on Special Assignment will engage in Culturally Responsive Training next month. This important work, where we learn to respect and relate to people from all cultures, will be the impetus for us creating and sustaining a culturally responsive school environment.

We are eager to begin in-person, hybrid instruction, and we respect the choice of families who wish to have their children remain in a fully remote setting as well. There will be challenges, and we are ready to meet them so your children transition smoothly.

Please enjoy the long weekend, and as we look forward to celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., let's take time to reflect on his messages of peace and justice.

Stay safe and be well!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent

