

# 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**

**Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.**

December 4, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

As promised in my previous communication, I have assessed our reopening status using the regional risk matrix (weekly activity level reports) and collaborated with our medical team and staff. I have determined that we must remain fully remote until after the holidays. We intend to phase in hybrid learning with grades PreK-5 students and all special needs students beginning January 25 followed by grades 6-12 on February 8. Keeping our families and staff safe remains our utmost priority.

Teachers will be returning to schools on January 19 in order to prepare for the return of students on January 25. We will provide teachers with professional development that week. Please note that Mountie and Bulldog groups are assigned and can be viewed in your Parent Access accounts.

While we are remote:

- **Equity, Curriculum and Instruction**

We realize that the consequences of this pandemic are unsettling and that many are worried about lost learning time, enthusiasm for school and social opportunities for their children. The Equity, Curriculum and Instruction Department is determined to turn these challenging times into opportunities for growth.

Teachers are developing new skills to support students virtually. For instance, some are creating Bitmoji/Google classrooms and utilizing online applications, such as Go Formative and EdPuzzle to formatively assess, BrainPop to increase student engagement, and Jamboard to create an interactive whiteboard. At the Board meeting our Directors for Humanities and STEM, Mr. Marcos Vargas and Ms. Jenn Goforth, respectively, talked about new science kits for middle school students, recent professional development on Amistad, visual and performing arts technology, and more. Details are on our [website](#).

Now, more than ever, this ongoing work is critical to our mission of supporting our students and providing them with a meaningful, challenging and interactive curriculum.

- **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Reminder: Parent/Teacher conferences take place next Wednesday - Friday. Schools will be on an abbreviated day schedule. For information about your virtual conferences, please be sure to refer to information sent from your principal or child's teacher.

- **Special Education**

The Pupil Services Department is updating its website to include a Pupil Services Handbook and other links to community resources. We are collaborating with our stakeholders, SEPAC and reviewing feedback on the handbook before we publish it. We are also researching other school districts' Pupil Services links to develop content that meets our stakeholders' needs. Additionally, I have interviewed a potential candidate to provide the district with a comprehensive Special Education Audit.

- **Winter Sports**

Based on the Governor's recent announcement, winter sports will begin after the new year. For the most up-to-date information on our high school teams, please see the Athletics [webpage](#).

- **Technology**

We do not want any family to struggle with internet access. The district has an agreement with Comcast Essentials for in-home WiFi access. This service is only available to families who do **not** have existing Internet service and is subject to approval by Comcast. This service is not intended to supplement any existing Internet service. Families can reach out to their building principal if they fit this criteria.

Our technology helpline, 301-259-1510, is open Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 3 PM.

We will be distributing devices to students/families who have previously requested them from their building principals on Wednesday, **December 9 at Hillside School** (Entrance B on the Hillside Ave. side) between the hours of **9 AM to 12 Noon and from 1 to 3 PM**.

- **Community Service**

During a season of giving, our staff and school community are demonstrating their compassion and desire to help others. Last week, Buzz Aldrin held its annual Thanksgiving drive. With this year's need even greater due to the pandemic, Buzz house leaders, teachers and the PTA collaborated to collect food and create baskets for families in need. Read [more](#). Hillside Elementary School also held its annual Coat Drive, organized by the Hillside PTA. Exceeding an original goal of 125 coats, 159 coats were collected and donated to Jersey Cares for distribution to men, women, children, and infants in need throughout New Jersey. And this Sunday, the Montclair Education Association will hold its annual Wrap & Roll "Thru." Volunteers will be on hand at the Montclair High School Annex to collect donated gifts and distribute them to families in need. Read [more](#).

*I extend my appreciation to all of our amazing Special Education staff as December 2 was National Special Education Day. This day of recognition reminds us of the importance of the nation's first federal Special Education law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and celebrates advancements and progress made in educating children with disabilities. On behalf of the district, I thank our Special Education staff for making a difference in our students' lives.*

*Montclair is strong. Our district is strong. And, we are stronger together. This pandemic has impacted the social-emotional and mental health of our community. We continue to address the hurdles we encounter during these trying times. We stand ready to provide the supports and interventions needed to bridge any gaps that occur between this remote learning experience and our eventual return to in-person learning. Montclair's children will not be left behind.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent