

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools
Weekly Community Message No. 2

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

December 11, 2020

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Hybrid instruction is scheduled to begin January 25 (PreK-5 and special education) and February 8 (Grades 6-12). As a reminder, please continue to follow the recommended Centers for Disease Control health and safety guidelines, such as wearing masks, keeping socially distant (six feet apart), and washing hands to help halt the spread of COVID-19.

While we have been remote, I am amazed at some incredible accomplishments of our students. Please be sure to see below to read about just a few of them. I couldn't be more proud of our resilient, bright and determined young people.

New this week:

- **Student Accomplishments to Celebrate**

- MHS senior Claire Manning has been named Soccer Player of the Year for 2020 by NJ.com Claire has committed to Georgetown. She scored 20 times this year leading an undefeated season.
- Oliver Koenig, a junior at MHS, won a [National Youngarts Foundation](#) award for jazz alto saxophone. Koenig has been recognized at the second highest honor, Honorable Mention, for his caliber of artistic achievement.
- Buzz student Maxwell Kumahor made the news as a member of an entrepreneur team in creating a lemonade business called Lemeneid. The group signed a partnership with Rezide Co-Living of Jersey City, a furnished apartment provider in Jersey City, welcoming tenants from around the world that come stocked with amenities. One of those amenities will be Lemeneid.
- Annika Aristimuno, junior at Montclair High School, has found a unique way to occupy her time while in quarantine. She and her friend Layla Hurwitz, also a junior at Montclair High, started an organization to help combat loneliness of elders during the COVID-19 pandemic. They collect letters and artwork and deliver them to local nursing

homes. They organized fellow Montclair teens to write letters to the residents that include artwork, poems and personal notes. Read [more](#).

- **Parent University**

In September we announced the creation of Parent University, a series of workshops designed to help families support their children during remote instruction. Our first series focused on learning more about the Google tools and technology students are using.

Following those initial installments, we received survey feedback and are now pleased to offer a new set of virtual sessions to be held December 14, 16 and 17 on how the pandemic has affected the mental health of children. Featuring two experts, we will discuss strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety during this challenging time, as well as ideas to help them cope and manage social issues that may arise during remote learning. See flyer in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

In addition, a Bilingual Parent University providing strategies for supporting your child during remote and hybrid learning will be held on December 16. See flyer in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

The Pupil Services Department also has brand new offerings at Parent University. Workshops are scheduled December 16 and 17. For details [read more](#).

- **COVID Monitoring App**

The district is in the process of researching and vetting a COVID monitoring app that will be used by staff and students when we return to school. We will be sharing information in the near future when the application is acquired and ready to be utilized.

Ongoing:

- **Food Service**

Food service is available for every child regardless of free and reduced meal status. The schedule for picking up meals is as follows: Monday and Wednesday from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM at Nishuane, Bullock, Northeast and Montclair High School. We will have a special announcement in the December 18 weekly message for meals between December 28 through January 3.

- **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 need more information.

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 Tuesday, **December 15** 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**.

I commend your advocacy for your children and truly appreciate your patience, as together we can support our students and give them the best possible learning experience in these most difficult times.

Wishing everyone celebrating Hanukkah a joyous eight days!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent