



Livingston PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Matthew J. Block
Superintendent of Schools

11 Foxcroft Drive
Livingston, New Jersey 07039
Telephone: (973) 535-8000 ext. 8011
E-mail: mblock@livingston.org
Website: www.livingston.org

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Dear Livingston Public Schools Community:

As the 2019-2020 school year nears its end, I want to thank you for your patience, partnership, and perseverance as we have worked through many obstacles and challenges together. This was a school year we could never have imagined, will never forget, and hope to never repeat. Nonetheless, the collective spirit and can-do attitude of our families, our community, our students and the entire Livingston Public Schools educational team has been outstanding and uplifting.

With only a few days left of school, we are increasing our focus on the opening of school for next year. As I write this letter, it is important to recognize that New Jersey's school districts have not yet received any information or guidance from the New Jersey Department of Education on reopening. We are told that guidance on re-opening schools will likely be issued soon, but there is a widely-held belief that, even if the plan comes to us now, it may change multiple times between June and September. Although we are working without this essential information, we have started scenario planning, and anticipating some potential formats of our fall re-opening.

Based on articles and information we have reviewed to this point, we understand that the general options for reopening schools can be categorized as follows:

- Full in-person learning (with added health and safety measures)
- Beginning in-person and then moving to remote (then possibly back again)
- Beginning remote and then moving to in-person (then possibly back again)
- A Combination or Hybrid Model (doing some type of remote and in-person simultaneously)

This category includes:

1. Alternate days or weeks remote to in-person
 2. Limited days (one or two days per week) in-person and the rest remote.
 3. Limited grade levels in-person (ex: elementary returns in-person and secondary stays remote)
- Full remote for the year (or until current health situation is resolved)

Certainly, the health and safety of our students, staff, and families need to be our highest priority as we grapple with any related guidelines we receive from the State. It is likely that any version of an in-person return would be accompanied by the need to:

- Have all staff and students wear masks or face shields and possibly gloves in school
- Prevent any guests or members of the outside public from entering schools
- Space out classrooms in a socially distanced format
- Utilize multiple entrances and exits to deter before and after school gatherings
- Avoid large all-school gatherings in cafeterias or auditoriums
- Strategically plan hallway traffic
- Have multiple opportunities for hand washing or hand cleaning throughout the day
- Conduct daily health checks (of some sort) of each student

Livingston Public Schools: Empowering all to learn, create, contribute, and grow.

- Implement cleaning protocols multiple times a day, in bathrooms and common areas in particular
- Be prepared to transition quickly to remote learning as the health and safety situation dictates

We have set in place a multi-step planning framework, so that we can begin preparing for next school year in an informed and methodical way no matter what we are required to do. This framework includes the following:

- Solidify our remote learning plan by gathering feedback on our past experience in remote learning through surveys and focus groups with teachers, families, and students. We have already received many surveys back, and our administrators are prepared to begin the focus group process soon.
- Scenario plan with staff, supervisors, and educational leaders in our district in order to think through issues related to reopening schools.
- Create a “Return to School” plan through a re-opening task force committee with subcommittees consisting of multiple stakeholders.
- Communicate that plan out to the community as early in the summer as possible.
- Prepare for the opening of school in September, and ensure we are ready to welcome our students back no matter what parameters are in place.

In order to be ready for September, we will need to:

- Reflect on and reimagine how instruction can best operate under a possible extended remote learning period or in a hybrid model. Elementary level learning will be a particular focus of this work due to the extraordinary challenges of meeting the developmental needs of our youngest students remotely.
- Focus on how we can enhance our efforts to provide social and emotional support to students and families.
- Ensure we have the needed supplies and equipment, to facilitate instruction and safety; we have already started this process.

We know that planning for reopening comes with many challenges. We have been working to anticipate these challenges, and brainstorming ways to address them. Starting a school year remotely would be very different from transitioning to remote learning after nearly three marking periods (as we did this year). Additionally, the extremely high number of “unknowns” make planning difficult. At this time, there are far more unanswered questions than answered ones.

As we have done for the past three months, we need to continue to ask for your patience and understanding as we navigate these uncharted waters. Rest assured that we will be focused throughout the summer on preparing for September, and taking the necessary steps to be sure that we are ready to provide the best possible educational experiences for our students during the 2020-2021 school year.

We are all in this together, and we need to continue to prepare for whatever comes our way. We will keep you informed as more information becomes available. Thank you for your continued partnership in helping our students to learn, create, contribute, and grow.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Block
Superintendent of Schools