



Script of Dr. Block's February 26, 2021 Video Message

Good Afternoon Livingston Public Schools Community. This is Matt Block, Superintendent of Schools.

In prior videos, I have made reference to spring being a time of renewal. After an unprecedented and extraordinary year for everyone, this week we finally began to see some light at the end of the long tunnel. I was pleased to learn this morning that, for the fourth week in a row, the COVID-related data state-wide has improved. While our region is still designated as High Risk, this week the State of New Jersey overall, for the first time since the beginning of November, moved to Moderate Risk or Yellow, from high-risk Orange. Additionally, a number of our staff members have reported that they have received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine. Daylight saving time is only two weeks away. And finally, this week the sun was out, the snow began to melt, and thanks to the absence of any additional snow events, we completed a full week of in-person hybrid learning.

Our administrative team has been focused on planning to capitalize on these spring improvements. Our goal is to maximize the amount of time we can get our students into school for in-person learning. A step in that direction included sending a commitment form to all elementary families this week. That form was launched through Genesis this past Tuesday. We have gotten a great response, and we thank everyone who responded so quickly. The deadline to make any changes to the form or to submit the form to us, is this Sunday, February 28th by midnight. We need to know how many elementary students plan to access in-person learning. Honest accurate answers are essential to our planning process. We intend to announce next steps for in-person learning next week, and need accurate information from our families to do so. I am asking each family, if you have not submitted your response to this form, please please do so no later than this Sunday, February 28th at midnight. Thank you.

With spring at our doorstep and the trends surrounding the virus improving, we are hoping to make an initial pivot at the elementary level by March 15th. We continue to monitor our recent secondary school pivot, and will do so through spring break in consideration of a possible additional pivot. As the weather begins to cooperate on a more regular basis, we are excited to implement some plans to utilize our outdoor space to bring our schools even closer to “back to normal.” It is my sincere hope that before the end of this school year, life will start to resemble how our day-to-day lives looked prior to January of 2020. While it is difficult to predict what the world will look like six months from now, I am optimistic that, in the fall, we will be looking in the rearview mirror and bidding farewell to many of the obstacles and restrictions we encountered this year.

Any time we make a pivot to our learning model, at any level, we must do so while prioritizing the safety and health of our community. We will continue to put health and safety at the forefront of all our decisions. Adjusting schedules, cohorts, and in-person time also means modifying in-school procedures, transportation routes and other logistics in addition to the scheduling shifts that happen for our families, students, and teachers. We need to plan thoughtfully, carefully, and deliberately as we consider the next steps on our journey.

Our LPS educator team, who have done amazing things under the most difficult of circumstances, will continue to do all they can to connect with our students and help them learn and succeed. Every member of our team loves seeing our students in-person, greeting them, interacting with them, and watching them engage with one another. Our schools are here to keep them safe and to help them flourish. I understand that there are differences of opinions as to how to find the right balance of those two things during a global pandemic. Despite those differences, we need to recognize that everything we have been able to accomplish to this point has been the result of partnership, collaboration, respectful discourse, and a common belief that we all want what is best for our students, staff, families, and schools. I promise you that we remain committed to doing our best to navigate these uncharted waters and we will continue to work tirelessly to meet the needs of our students. I believe that better days will be here soon.

Thank you.