



Livingston

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Livingston Public Schools Community:

I hope this letter finds everyone well, safe, and enjoying the early weeks of summer. Although we have been thinking about the 2020-2021 school year for months, the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year has allowed us to turn our full focus to the reopening of our schools in September. We are engaging in a rigorous process of reviewing and refining our remote learning plan, while also preparing for in-person reopening of schools in the fall. There is still a significant amount of planning that needs to happen before school begins. The challenge for all educational institutions is to determine how to maximize opportunities for in-person instruction and socialization, while ensuring that we provide a safe and healthy environment for students, staff, and community members. The health and safety of our students and staff is paramount.

On June 26th, in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Health, the New Jersey Department of Education released [Restart & Recovery: The Road Back](#), its 104-page guidance document for reopening New Jersey's school. While this guide provides flexibility for how schools will reopen, it requires that all school districts in New Jersey develop a reopening plan. "Conditions for learning must not only address students' and educators' basic physical safety needs, but also the social and emotional and environmental factors that can impact educators' capacity to teach and students' capacity to learn." *The Road Back* emphasizes the need for districts to be able to "pivot" to and from different instructional delivery models as circumstances, information, and guidelines change.

We have two major tasks ahead of us this summer:

- Plan for a return to in-person instruction in our school facilities: As was true with remote learning, this will require us to reimagine how we deliver instruction and organize school in the current environment.
- Reflect, refine, and reimagine our remote learning plan. With the unpredictability of the current health situation, we will need to be prepared to continue remote learning again, either in conjunction with in-person learning or potentially for full delivery of instruction if it becomes necessary to close our facilities.

We have been continually working in administrative committees on issues related to reopening since May. After *The Road Back* was released, we also formed a Restart Committee made up of multiple stakeholders. In subcommittees, these groups are examining the issues relating to governance, school operations, health and wellness, instruction, and technology. The committees will be meeting throughout July and August to work through the many details that must be considered in order to prepare to open our facilities at the beginning of September. As we work in committees, learn new information, and consult with health experts and other professionals, we will adjust our plans, and will seek input from members of our community as the planning unfolds.

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

We are already in the process of developing a detailed health and safety plan for our schools. We are purchasing equipment and working to prepare our facilities. We expect that our health and safety plan will include students and staff wearing masks. Among other measures, we will also likely implement daily health-checks for students, not allow visitors in our schools, and have very thorough and frequent cleaning protocols. We will be communicating to parents those things we can do to prepare for the school year. Right now, those include:

- Having a working thermometer at home since it will be important for conducting daily health checks with your child.
- Ensuring your child is wearing masks regularly and building up tolerance for mask wearing.

As the school year gets underway, we will need to work with our students age-appropriately to assist them with adhering to health and safety protocols to help reinforce their understanding and compliance with new health-related practices. We will spend the time to familiarize everyone with routines, both old and new, during the first days of school.

As we plan for an in-person return, we will simultaneously continue our efforts to collect and use feedback from students, parents, and staff to refine and improve upon the remote instruction experience this past spring. Our remote instruction subcommittees are currently working with parent, student, and teacher survey feedback to increase the rigor, touchpoints, expectations, and consistency of our remote instruction model. Remote instruction focus groups are currently happening, and are sure to yield additional valuable information. In order to be prepared for possible remote instruction at any point next school year, all students K-12 will be issued a one-to-one district technology device to ensure access to virtual instruction. Additionally, we are connecting with local child care providers to identify opportunities to assist our families who may require those services.

In order to get some input from our families, we have created a parent survey to get feedback on the options listed below, and to assist us with solidifying our overall plans. The survey will be emailed to you separately today through our Genesis Portal. Hearing from parents about their intentions, thoughts, and hopes for the 2020-2021 school year will allow us to make necessary decisions.

It is extremely important that everyone responds to this survey.

This survey will not require you to make a firm commitment on your personal intentions for the fall, but it will ask that you provide responses that are as accurate as possible since the information we gather will be extremely important to our planning process. Completing the survey is very important since your selected programmatic preferences will be critical to inform the framework and educational experiences ahead.

In order to help inform your feedback to us, we have listed several return to school scenarios we are currently considering based on the information we know at this point. Please note that, if we are in a hybrid model, all efforts will be made to ensure that siblings attending in-person classes in multiple buildings, will be assigned to the same cohort rotation.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

In-Person Option A	In-Person Option B	All Virtual Option C
<p>SHORTENED DAY MODEL (in person instruction with self-contained groups/greater distancing)</p> <p>Recognizing that remote learning is the most challenging for our youngest students, our goal is to be able to have all elementary school students (Pre-K-5) report to school in-person, five days per week.</p> <p>The day would likely need to be a slightly abbreviated (for example, possibly a 5-hour day) to manage distancing logistics of 3-6 feet* with students and staff wearing masks. For this option, students would be placed into self-contained groups in order to control and limit exposure. This option would involve the greatest number of people in the classroom.</p> <p>The feasibility of this scenario will be dependent on the number of students who choose to remain remote. The results of the survey will assist us in determining whether this is possible under the current safety guidelines.</p> <p><i>* Based upon American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Guidelines</i></p>	<p>HYBRID MODEL (part remote, part in-person instruction)</p> <p>We are also considering a possible hybrid model for elementary students. A hybrid model allows us to split class rosters into multiple in-person groups to ensure greater physical distancing and fewer people in our facilities.</p> <p>For this option we would be looking to have students attend school for a minimum of two days per week. In-person instruction would be supplemented with virtual instruction to provide a full week of learning experiences. The district is currently working to re-imagine and strengthen remote learning to provide an enhanced program.</p> <p>We are currently having conversations with the YMCA to explore child care options to offer child care options to families who may need their services.</p>	<p>Please be advised that in addition to the options outlined above, the district is proceeding with planning for full virtual learning in order to meet the needs of families who elect to have their children remain at home. The district is currently working to re-imagine and strengthen remote learning to provide an enhanced program. It is important to remember that any virtual model is not contemplated in NJDOE's The Road Back plan, and ultimately, the district will need further guidance for approvals from the NJDOE to allow parental requests to be honored.</p>

**MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS
(MPM, HMS, and LHS)**

In Person Option	All Virtual Option C
<p>HYBRID MODEL - Due to the size of our secondary schools and the complex nature of student schedules, we are discussing various hybrid models for our secondary schools to begin the school year.</p> <p>In a hybrid model, students will work remotely for a number of days each week and will report to school for a number of days per week. This model will allow us to maintain a 6 feet* safely-distanced environment with students and staff wearing masks. Since our older students are more capable of independent and virtual work, we believe that this model would address safety guidelines in schools that require multiple contacts with students and teachers.</p> <p><i>* Based upon Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Guidelines</i></p>	<p>Please be advised that in addition to the option outlined above, the district is proceeding with planning for full virtual learning in order to meet the needs of families who elect to have their children remain at home. It is important to remember that any virtual model is not contemplated in NJDOE's The Road Back plan, and ultimately, the district will need further guidance for approvals from the NJDOE to allow parental requests to be honored.</p>

The Livingston Public Schools' plan for reopening will be presented to families approximately one month before school is scheduled to open. It is important to recognize that there are still many unknowns that we will have to work through between now and September. Our main objective continues to be to provide workable options that consider the needs of students, families, and staff. I am confident that, with your continued partnership and support, we will be able to meet this extraordinary challenge.

Please remember that all of these plans depend on the health circumstances in our community, as well as the input of our local Department of Health and our school physician. Our final plans will need to consider staffing, space, transportation logistics, and most of all the status of the health risks at the time of the opening of school. Most of the planning work is still ahead of us. If it is determined that the plans outlined above cannot work, we will need to "pivot" accordingly.

Thank you, again.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Block
Superintendent of Schools