



## ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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MRS. PHYLLIS ALPAUGH  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

July 31, 2020

Dear Parents and Members of the Rockaway Borough Community,

I hope everyone is well and safe.

As many of you are aware, on June 24th, the Governor released his reopening school plan "The Road Back-- Restart and Recovery Plan for Education" that provides guidance for New Jersey school districts regarding the safe reopening of schools for in-person instruction for September. To best develop a plan that addresses academics as well as the safety and health of students, their families and staff, we formed a Reopen School Committee with a variety of stakeholders to begin the process. I want to openly thank our 40+ volunteers who have been meeting regularly since May to share ideas and investigate options as well as the Board of Education for their support and insight. On Tuesday evening July 21st, I presented our **proposed plan** at the Board of Education meeting that included essential points that address both academics as well as the necessary health and safety measures. Thank you so much to all who attended virtually or in person. Following that presentation, the Governor announced last Friday June 24th that all families may choose a full time remote learning option. Here are some of the key elements our proposed plan as well as some of the updates we are considering based on overall feedback:

- The district will follow a hybrid model with Monday reserved for virtual instruction for most students with in-person instruction focusing on core content subjects such as English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. We are currently in the process of placing students into A/B cohorts with the hope of keeping families in the same cohort.
- Half-day integrated preschool classes will attend AM/PM sessions twice a week with virtual instruction the other three days.
- Students in self-contained programs in both Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson will receive in person instruction Monday through Friday every week.
- Due to our concern to better address hybrid students working remotely as well as students choosing a total remote option, we plan to forego lunch on in-person days and dismissing students at 1:00 pm. This way teachers can utilize the afternoon to support and check in with students virtually on a daily basis.
- Also while we were hopeful in coordinating our assignment of cohorts with the high school, they have changed their proposed model and as a result, we have decided to stay with our original choice as it is more suitable for all our students.

In regards to safety, we will implement physical spacing measures in all classrooms, hallways and other common areas. **Although we will attempt to create social distancing of six feet whenever possible, unless a student or staff has a documented medical condition that precludes the use of face coverings, all students and staff will be required to wear masks in the building or on a bus at all times.** Additionally, we will build in time during the day for hand washing, appropriate mask "breaks", snack times, and any other necessary measures.

Once our plan is finalized and approved, we will share it with the community and be asking parents to let us know whether their children will be attending school in person or learning entirely remotely, so that building principals can prepare class schedules as well as prepare their respective buildings for our reopening in September. More information in particular will follow regarding the procedures for those families who choose full time remote learning options. In preparation for our return, here are a number of other things you can start to do to better prepare your family.

1. Purchase a thermometer so you can easily screen your child(ren) daily at home to confirm that they are free from all symptoms --including fever so that they are not coming to school ill.
2. Purchase or make several well-fitting, comfortable, but washable cloth face masks as your child will need a clean mask each day.
3. Work on building mask stamina with your children so they are comfortable when they return to school.
4. Continue to be positive and reinforce healthy habits with your family. Children often take cues on how to handle challenging situations from the adults in their lives. If they see you are calm hopefully they will be too.

I know this is a lot to process, and may not be the answers you are looking for, but hopefully the information in general will help you as a family to plan for the coming months. Please remember, any of our proposed plans are fluid and subject to change as we must follow directives from the Department of Education as well as local and state health officials. Also in making district decisions, we have tried to create programming and protocols that take into account the health and safety of all parties.

Many thanks always, for all your support, patience and understanding during this very trying and unprecedented time. As we move forward, I am confident that Rockaway Borough can work together to do what's best for our students, families and staff.

Best wishes always,



Phyllis Alpaugh  
Superintendent