



ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

103 EAST MAIN STREET
ROCKAWAY, NEW JERSEY 07866
TEL: 973-625-8601
FAX: 973-625-7355

MRS. PHYLLIS ALPAUGH
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

August 2020

Dear Rockaway Borough Parents and Families,

As I begin all my correspondence with you, I hope this letter finds you and your families well as I welcome you back for the 2020-21 school year. This has certainly been an unprecedented year with so much happening starting back in February when Corona virus and COVID-19 were new phrases to our vocabulary and their potential effect so beyond our imagination. While the start of school will certainly be different and unlike any other, we are hopeful that we can forge ahead and make this “new normal” a transformative year for everyone.

To say that the past two months have been busy would be an understatement. Besides dealing with normal summer cleaning and our scheduled referendum projects, the administrative team has been focused on developing our Reopen School Plan, but more importantly preparing to bring students and staff back to the campus safely. Last week, the district unfortunately had to revise its Reopening Plan regarding Lincoln as delays in our referendum projects has made it impossible to safely bring students and staff back to the building. As a result, Lincoln students will start the year remotely with a targeted return date of Monday October 5th. As the delayed start at Lincoln is not COVID-19 related, Thomas Jefferson will reopen following our proposed hybrid mode. This model reduces the amount of students on campus to adhere to suggested social distancing on a daily basis while still supporting in-person instruction. Face coverings will be required by all parties, heightened cleaning procedures will be put in place and hand washing and sanitizing will be encouraged. Most importantly, we are asking both students and staff to screen themselves each morning, and if not feeling well or showing targeted symptoms, to simply stay home. To assist you we will be providing you with a daily checklist as well as Screening Form certifying that you are aware of the procedures and that you will faithfully screen your child(ren) on a daily basis before sending them to in-person instruction. Building principals will be reaching out to you with more detailed information regarding specific building procedures such as arrival and dismissal times, online attendance, Google logins, etc.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the one silver lining has been our ability to move forward with our referendum renovation and construction projects getting a head start in the spring when the buildings were closed. Over the course of the past few months, targeted work was completed in both buildings. At Thomas Jefferson, new roofs were installed over the majority of the building except for the 4th grade wing including a shingled roof over the gym area. In the front of the building, the safety vestibule along with the new safety doors were installed and the staff bathrooms and student bathrooms in the main hall were totally renovated. Lincoln also got a new roof, the asbestos abatement took place and all classrooms got new ceilings, lights and floors. Ceilings and lights were also replaced in the hallways with the new flooring to follow in the upcoming months. Outside, the trailers were moved across the blacktop with contractors breaking ground for the addition. We look forward to a time when you will be able to see all the work that has been accomplished in person, and the overall enhanced look of both buildings.

This coming year in addition to our returning staff, the district will also be welcoming a number of new staff members to fill open positions in both buildings that include teachers and support staff. We look forward to having you meet them whether it is virtually or in person. To help maintain and secure a safe in-person learning environment, we have paired up with the Rockaway Borough Police Department to bring back our Class III officer, Mark Rogalsky, who will once again be present on site throughout the school day. Also to support our hybrid model as well as curricular efforts, we will be extending our 1:1 initiative district wide and issuing Chromebooks to include all students in Preschool through 8th grade.

In light of our experiences last spring during the closure, three district goals have been set involving (1) the continued integration of Social Emotional learning for all students, their families and staff, (2) the refinement of our district distance learning and blended learning platforms, and (3) improving student attendance and engagement for both in

person and virtual scenarios. I believe in light of everything we have experienced since the onset of the pandemic last March, that these are noteworthy initiatives that can only strengthen and support our overall instructional platforms and efforts. In addition, I will continue as last year with a number of my personal goals namely to increase overall communication with all stakeholders, increase knowledge of professional learning strategies for staff, and also keep abreast of all aspects relating to our district facilities and current referendum projects. To support all these goals, I will make myself as available and present as always to both the staff and students, as well as to you, the families of Rockaway Borough.

With that said, thank you in advance for your support and confidence as we can only accomplish our goals and get through the coming year by working together as a learning community. While this year may not look “normal”, we can still make it a great one for our Rockaway Borough students.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. A. [unclear]".

Superintendent