



# Mountainside School District

1497 Woodacres Dr., Mountainside, NJ 07092

908-232-3232

[www.mountainsideschools.org](http://www.mountainsideschools.org)

**Mrs. Janet Walling – Superintendent of Schools**

July 20, 2020

Mountainside Families,

I hope that everyone is doing well and enjoying your summer. I would like to thank you for your thoughts, feedback and ideas that were shared through our recent Reopening Survey. This input, along with that of our staff, has been very helpful as we begin making plans to reopen the Mountainside Schools in September. Planning for this coming year is filled with challenges like none of us have ever faced and includes many unique and important aspects to be taken into consideration in order for students to be in school as much as possible while preserving the safety of everyone in the school environment.

I am aware that families have different views and desires for how education, safety, and programming should “look” in September, and fully admit there is truly NO perfect solution to our current situation. While no plan will be able to meet every preference, I am pleased that we are able to incorporate many of the most prevalent ideas and suggestions from the parent survey responses within our reopening structure. Please also be aware that there are a variety of “anticipated minimum requirements” within the New Jersey Department of Education’s [Road Back](#) guidance that all schools must follow when creating their reopening plans. Taking all of these aspects into consideration, along with input from our County Superintendent of Schools and local department of health, we are planning for the Mountainside Schools to reopen with the following structure:

- **School will reopen with all students attending school 5-days per week utilizing a shortened day schedule.**

Although there are still many, many day-to-day details to develop and finalize pertaining to health, safety, and instruction, I would like to share with you some aspects of our reopening structure that have already been addressed. These include the following:

- Students, when seated at their desks in the majority of classrooms, will meet or exceed the 6-foot social distancing standard that is recommended by both the NJDOE and the CDC. In the rare instance that this may not be attainable, barriers will be put in place as recommended.
  - This spacing arrangement has become possible as a result of diligent planning, creative use of classroom space, and a concerted effort to reduce class sizes where necessary.
  - All student desks will be placed in rows and facing forward.

- The shortened day schedule is expected to closely follow the timing of our existing early dismissal times.
  - Exact start and end times will be communicated once transportation is finalized.
- Static student and staff groupings will be maintained to the greatest extent possible to restrict mixing across groups.
- Lunch and recess will not take place, however Free and Reduced lunches (Grab and Go) will be provided to those students who qualify.
- The Westfield YMCA will continue to provide aftercare in both buildings, as space allows, for students that sign up for the program.
  - Grab and Go lunches may be available for purchase for students to have lunch at aftercare.
  - Please note: We do not anticipate the availability of a before care program at this time due to transportation issues and sanitizing aspects which are more difficult to manage prior to school starting each day.
- The Mountainside Schools will implement the NJDOE Road Back guidelines for face coverings as follows:
  - School staff and visitors will be required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.
  - Students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health.
- Time will be provided during the day to allow for increased handwashing, mask "breaks," snack, and physical movement.
  - Teachers will be encouraged to utilize outdoor space as appropriate to support instructional, emotional, and developmental needs.
- Protocols will be in place to reduce large gatherings as well as limiting non-essential visitors and volunteers.
- The use of the gym locker rooms will be eliminated during the school day and students will not need to change for gym at the middle school level.
- Protocols for keeping staff and students home exhibiting signs of illness will be strictly enforced.
- Sanitizing stations will be placed throughout the buildings.
- Increased use of technology, 1:1 devices, and online programming for students
  - This will be implemented within the classroom as well as through independent and/or teacher directed activities to be completed after the shortened day in order to continue student learning "beyond the bell".
  - This will also be utilized to enhance student comfort and independent use of technology in the event that we need to return to a fully remote learning environment at any time during the school year.

Remote Learning Option: Some parent survey responses referenced a desire to have their child continue with remote learning only. As you may be aware, the Governor announced this morning that this option will be available to parents and that further information will be provided by the Department of Education later this week. More detailed information regarding the structure of an all-remote option will be shared with you once we have an opportunity to review this guidance.

This letter contains a great deal of information and I am sure it is a bit overwhelming, however, we wanted to provide you with a broad overview to give you a sense of what school will "look"

like in the fall and help you with your planning. The full Reopening Plan will address many additional aspects and considerations pertaining to school routines, health and screening practices, transportation, instruction, and more. An outline of the Reopening Plan will be presented at our upcoming Board of Education meeting on July 28th and additional specifics will be sent to all Beechwood and Deerfield families in early August.

Every aspect and every decision being considered for reopening, will be thoroughly evaluated and made with the health and safety of staff and students in mind. All of our Reopening Committees are working within the Road Back guidelines to create as welcome and supportive of an educational environment as possible for all of the students of Mountainside. Additionally, we will remain vigilant and aware of any guidance modifications from the state or NJDOE, as well any changes to the health and safety needs of our community, in order to adjust the plans when and if it becomes necessary.

While school in September may look a bit different than any other year, please know that we are preparing to welcome your children back with smiles (even though they may be a bit more difficult to see), with caring, and with support as only Mountainside can!

Be well,

*Janet Walling*

Janet Walling