



# Mountainside Board Of Education

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Mrs. Janet Walling – Superintendent of Schools

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August 11, 2020

Mountainside Parents / Guardians:

I am writing to share a number of important updates regarding the Mountainside School District's reopening plans for September. Specifically, I would like to share the following:

- A detailed outline of the two instructional options available for your child
- A link to our Parent Request for Programming Form which must be completed and submitted for EACH student by August 18<sup>th</sup>
- Information regarding a change to our school calendar

Mountainside Reopening Committees have worked tirelessly to address critical areas mandated by the New Jersey Road Back guidelines for the reopening of schools in September. I would like to personally thank the over 50 administrators, staff members, parents, and Board of Education members, along with our school physician and local health department officials who have contributed to building a multi-layered plan. Each decision has been made with the health and safety of our students and staff at the forefront, as well as a desire to create meaningful educational opportunities for our students in both in-person and fully remote structures.

As you may be aware, Governor Murphy announced on July 24<sup>th</sup> that parents/guardians have the option of choosing to have their child attend school through either an In-Person option or a Fully Remote option. The Mountainside School District has developed educational programs for each option as outlined below. The District would like to provide parents/guardians with flexibility, but also needs to plan in advance for scheduling purposes and to ensure we are abiding by all reopening requirements.

Please carefully review the following programming details in order to determine the most beneficial structure for your child at this time and **submit your choice through this [Parent Request for Programming Form](#)**. A separate form for **EACH child** in your family must be submitted by **Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>**.

## **Option 1: In-Person Instruction**

**Students attend school 5-days per week utilizing a shortened day schedule**

- **School Hours:**
  - Deerfield School: 8:05 - 12:40
  - Beechwood School: 8:15 – 12:50
- **Instructional Programming:**
  - **Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade specific:**
    - Students receive daily instruction in core-content areas
    - Students receive related arts or physical education daily
      - Related Arts classes will be delivered on a 2 week rotation
    - Students will remain in static homeroom cohorts to the greatest extent possible

- o 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade specific:
  - Students participate in a 5 period drop schedule where they receive direct instruction on 4 content areas per day
  - Students receive related arts or physical education daily
    - Students will not change clothes for physical education class
  - Students will remain in static cohorts wherever possible
    - 8<sup>th</sup> grade ONLY: Students may move between cohorts, with as minimal overlap as possible, in order to allow for the continuation of differentiated math courses, honors language arts, and honors science
  
- o ALL Grades (K-8):
  - Special education students will receive in-person programming aligned with IEP goals
    - Special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers, will provide services within classroom and individualized settings as identified in IEPs.
    - Instructional groupings will remain static to the greatest extent practicable
    - Increased sanitization measures, additional PPE, and the use of physical barriers will be utilized when social distancing is difficult to maintain or the use of shared materials cannot be avoided.
  - All students may be provided with homework and/or other extension activities such as online practice to be completed independently the afternoon
    - Small group or related arts sessions may occur virtually after dismissal, due to scheduling needs. *Prior notice will be provided for scheduling purposes in the event that this will occur.*
  
- Important Daily Procedures and Considerations:
  - o **Students and staff are required to wear face coverings at all times while in school** unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or there is a documented medical condition or a disability as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) which precludes the use of a face covering.
    - **PLEASE NOTE: This requirement is a change from previously shared information due to adjustments in the New Jersey Department of Education minimum standards as released on August 3, 2020.**
    - Exceptions to the above include some aspects such as:
      - During the period that a student is eating or drinking
      - The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities (ie, gym class when outdoors or in a well ventilated area, and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.)
    - The CDC does not recommend use of face shields as a substitute for face coverings. Therefore, they may not be used to satisfy face covering requirements.
  - o **Parents will be required to submit a daily screening form prior to 7:30 each morning via Powerschool to attest that they have monitored their child for signs of infectious illness each morning.**
    - In the event that the form is not submitted, students will be directed to the nurse for a health check, and parents will be called to verify screening information prior to the student entering the homeroom.
  - o 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 instances where this may not be feasible, barriers will be put in place as recommended
  - o Social distancing will be reinforced throughout the school day, including arrival, dismissal, and transition times

- Time will be provided for increased handwashing, snack, and physical movement
  - Teachers will be encouraged to utilize outdoor space as appropriate to support instructional, emotional, and developmental needs
  - Sanitizing stations will be placed throughout the building
- Grab and Go lunches will be provided, to be taken home, for students who qualify and will be available for purchase for all others
- Protocols will be in place to reduce large gatherings as well as limiting non-essential visitors and volunteers
- All health and safety protocols will be followed regarding any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 with staff or students. Specific details regarding these procedures, quarantine requirements, contact tracing, and other medical aspects are being finalized with input from our school physician and local health department. This detailed information will be shared with all families and staff once complete.
  - The NJDOE recently released a webpage with frequently asked questions related to school reopening which addresses some of these aspects and other areas. Specifically, you may find the section on screening and testing to be helpful:  
<https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/faqs/index.shtml>

## **Option 2: Fully Remote Learning**

The Remote Learning Option is open to all students in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, including those in special education programs, and has been designed to include a combination of teacher scheduled “live” instructional periods, posted lessons, and independent assignments. Students participating in Remote Learning will receive instruction and assignments aligned to the same grade-level standards and mirror the instruction and assignments delivered to in-person students to the greatest extent possible. Differentiated assignments will also be assigned to students according to their needs as reflected in data and teacher observation. Teachers may use supplemental resources to enhance remote instruction as needed, but at minimum, students will be assigned work aligned to the same grade-level instructional standards as in-person students. Students participating in the Board’s full time remote learning option will be afforded the same quality and scope of instruction and other educational services as any other student otherwise participating in the District’s in-person program.

- **Instructional Programming:**
  - Daily lessons, schedule, and relevant links will be posted within the student’s Google Classroom by 8am each morning for student access
    - Posted assignments will be a blend of instructional resources and teaching practices, including, but not limited to: teacher created assignments, pre-recorded videos and lessons, on-line textbooks and practice, independent activities, written work, and other developmentally appropriate lessons
    - Students will have until 9:00 pm to complete and turn in any assignments for the day
  - Lessons will be supported and enhanced by Mountainside staff on a daily basis
    - *Please note that classroom teachers will be providing in-person instruction from approximately 8:30 - 1:00; therefore, some live interactions with staff will be scheduled to take place between 1:20 and 3:20.*
  - Live instruction and support will be provided in the following manner:
    - **Kindergarten – 5th Grade:**
      - 1 daily period of instruction with homeroom teacher through Zoom and/or Google Meets
      - 1 daily “check-in” period with a teacher to ask questions, get clarification on assignments, or receive help

- 1 daily period of related arts and/or physical education
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grades:
  - 2 separate periods of instruction to be provided daily by content area teachers
    - Classes will be scheduled on a rotating basis so that students receive “live” instruction from each content area teacher 2 times per week
  - 1 daily period of related arts and/or physical education
  - Additional “office hours” will be scheduled for student support within subjects as needed
- ALL Grades (K-8):
  - Special education students will receive instruction and related services to the greatest extent possible within the remote format
    - Instruction and support will be aligned with identified IEP goals and may include but not be limited to: Small group Zoom/Google Meets lessons, targeted support during remote class instruction, individualized instructional support, and other instructional models as deemed appropriate
    - A parent/guardian may request that some services be delivered entirely remotely, while other services follow the same schedule they otherwise would according to the district’s in-person reopening plan.
    - Specific questions regarding individualized student needs and/or related services should be directed to the Child Study Team for further discussion
  - Additional small group sessions may be scheduled to take place at identified times for eligible AIM students or others demonstrating need for added support
- Other Procedures and considerations:
  - Students will be provided with a school issued Chromebook, or alternate device, to allow for timely access to lessons and programming if needed
    - Technology support will be available to address and access or technology needs
  - Attendance will be taken each day during the first scheduled remote period
    - Parents will need to notify the school of any student absence
  - Grab and Go lunches will be available for purchase by all students and provided for any students eligible to receive free or reduced meals
  - School administrators, counselors, and Child Study Team members will be available to support student and parent needs throughout a student’s time on remote learning
  - The District will maintain a traditional grading system for students participating in the Remote Learning option. Students will receive grades and have the same expectations for learning achievement as if they were in person.

Although parents can opt for remote instruction at any time, requested moves to in-person instruction will be implemented on the following dates: November 2, January 4, March 1, and May 3. Special circumstances which may require a transition outside of these dates will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additional information regarding the Mountainside Remote Learning policy, procedures for transitioning between programs, and technology protocols may be found on this [link](#).

In the event that health and safety situations change, and there is a need to return to a Districtwide Remote Learning structure, like we had in the spring, the Mountainside School District has developed enhanced schedules and plans to support this format. This plan, if implemented, will follow a more structured format than previously delivered and provide enhanced learning opportunities for all students. Specific schedules and details will be provided to all families in the event that this occurs.

## **School Calendar Change**

The Mountainside School District has approved the following calendar change for the 2020-2021 school year:

**The first day of school for students has been moved to Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>.**

This adjustment will allow for additional professional development and preparation for the reopening of schools, which is vital for the staff to be well prepared for all of the changes that this year will bring. This change will also provide an opportunity to schedule small group orientation sessions to take place between September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. These sessions will be structured in a way to provide students with an opportunity to meet their teacher(s) and see their new classroom(s) prior to our official first day of school. More information about these activities will be provided in the next few weeks.

I am aware that this correspondence contains a great deal of information and you may have a number of additional questions regarding these reopening options. Please reach out to the following administrators with any grade and student specific questions, or to me at the email address above if you have any general District inquiries:

- Kindergarten - 2nd Grades: Mrs. Suzanne Jenks - [sjenks@mountainsideschools.org](mailto:sjenks@mountainsideschools.org)
- 3rd– 8th Grades: Mrs. Kim Richards - [krichards@mountainsideschools.org](mailto:krichards@mountainsideschools.org)
- Special Education (PEAK - 8th grades): Mrs. Sheri Rouleau - [srouleau@mountainsideschools.org](mailto:srouleau@mountainsideschools.org)

I will continue to update you over the next few weeks as we prepare to welcome your children back for a new school year, and appreciate your assistance with the timely submission of the [Parent Request for Programming Form](#) as it will help us with our detailed planning and class lists for September.

Please continue to stay safe and be well,

*Janet Walling*  
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