



Mountainside School District

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Janet Walling - Superintendent of Schools

Mountainside Parents/Guardians,

August 18, 2021

I hope that everyone is well and enjoying your summer! As we reach the middle of August, our thoughts begin to turn towards September and our upcoming school year. The administrators and I have been busy preparing for our reopening and are excited to welcome everyone back in a few short weeks. Recently, we met with our District Reopening Committee made up of board members, teachers, school nurses, and parents to review our **Road Forward Plan**. This plan will be presented at the Board of Education meeting on August 24th and shared via email with families and staff following the meeting. I am very pleased that we have the ability to return to a more “normal” school environment in many ways this coming year. We are committed to providing students with as regular a school day as possible in a manner that fully supports their academic and emotional needs, while keeping everyone’s health and safety in mind.

Here are a few highlights to prepare for a safe and successful return to school **full day**, with additional details coming soon.

- **Face Masks:** As per Governor Murphy’s recent [Executive Order # 251](#), face masks will be required for all students, staff, and visitors when they are indoors, regardless of their vaccination status. Limited exceptions to this requirement will be applied as identified within the Executive Order.
 - Students will not need to wear face masks during lunch or snack times, and will be seated at a 6 foot distance to minimize close contact concerns.
 - **While outdoors, masks will NOT be required** for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.
 - Teachers will continue to incorporate mask breaks and the use of outdoors when feasible.
 - Masks will continue to be **required** on school buses as per federal requirements.

It is our hope that the health circumstances and guidance may change during the year in order to allow for more flexibility regarding masks. Should that occur, we will adjust our plans accordingly.

- **Health Screening Process:** New this year, parents must complete an attestation prior to the 1st of each month to indicate they will monitor their children for COVID symptoms on a daily basis and not send a child who is sick/symptomatic to school. This monthly form will be shared through our new Genesis Parent Portal. *(This attestation will replace the daily health screener that was required last year).*
- **COVID Exposure and Quarantine:** We will continue to follow all rules set by the New Jersey Department of Health for contact tracing and quarantining. At this time, fully vaccinated individuals do NOT need to quarantine if they are exposed to a COVID-positive individual so long as they remain asymptomatic.
 - As per the most recent CDC update, in instances of a positive case in the classroom setting, if individuals have been spaced at least 3 feet apart from one another AND all are wearing masks, then individuals exposed to the positive case should NOT need to quarantine as they would not be considered a “close contact”. *While the NJDOH has not yet released its guidance for the coming school year, the anticipation is that they will follow the CDC and adopt this rule change.*

- The District will continue to strive for a 6 foot distance between desks, to the greatest extent feasible, in order to maximize safety for all students and staff and greatly reduce potential exposure and quarantine concerns.
- **Remote Instruction:** All students are expected to attend school in person for the 2021-2022 school year. Remote instruction will **ONLY** be provided to students who test positive for COVID, or are required to quarantine due to exposure. Access to this form of home instruction will NOT be available on a daily or ongoing basis for any other circumstances.

As we have all learned over the past year and a half, our guidance and mandates are subject to change based upon COVID circumstances and we are prepared to pivot and adjust to meet any changing guidance or health conditions.

Other Important Reopening Details and Dates:

- **Genesis Student Information System:** Mountainside School District has transitioned from PowerSchool to Genesis as our student information system. On Friday, August 27th all parents will receive an email with detailed information and a login/password for the Parent Portal. Once you are logged into the system, you will be able to access important information for your child including the following:
 - **Your child's homeroom teacher/assignment and middle school schedules**
 - Parents will be required to electronically sign various important beginning of the year forms BEFORE you are able to access your child's homeroom assignment
 - Parents will have the ability to change/update contact information, report a student absence, view report cards, and in grades 6-8 access your child's gradebook.
- **Important Dates:** Further information and times will be shared by the building principals
 - **September 2nd** – Classroom Visitations for PEAK through 3rd grade
 - **September 8th** – School Opens for all students FULL DAY – WELCOME BACK!!
 - **September 16th** – No School
 - **September 22nd** – Beechwood School Back to School Night
 - **September 23rd** – Deerfield School Back to School Night
- **Board of Education Meetings:** The Board of Education is pleased to return to conducting fully in-person meetings without a gathering limitation. Meetings will be held in the Deerfield Media Center. Members of the public who wish to attend, or ask questions of the Board, are welcome to attend and will be required to wear masks as per the current Executive Order.
 - Meetings can also be viewed via live streaming through the following YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MSDBOE1497>
 - The next Board of Education meeting will be held on August 24th with the public portion of the meeting beginning at 7:30

Our community has proven that we can weather any uncertainties that may come our way, and I am confident that by working together we will be even more successful this coming year! On behalf of the entire Mountainside staff, I hope you enjoy the remaining days of summer and we look forward to welcoming everyone back on September 8th. We've got this!

Janet Walling