

*Paramus Public Schools:  
Public Board Update*

February 22, 2021

# Presentation Overview

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# Misconceptions (1 of 3)

- **State Guidelines**

- Misleading Statement: the guidelines issued by the State are merely recommendations and districts are not required to follow them.
- Clarifying Statement: the guidelines issued by the State contain non-negotiable elements (called “Anticipated Minimum Standards”) as well as elements that should be considered but are not required (called “Additional Considerations”).

- **Roles of NJDOH/PBOH/PBOE**

- Misleading Statement: the learning model implemented by the district is a decision entirely up to the Superintendent.
- Clarifying Statement: while the Superintendent is the final decision maker regarding the district’s learning model, the Superintendent’s decision itself must be based, in part, on the level of COVID-19 transmission in the region and collaboration with the local Board of Health in conjunction with the guidelines provided by the New Jersey Department of Health.

# Misconceptions (2 of 3)

- **Social Distancing**

- *Misleading Statement: since the guidelines state that “schools and districts must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable”, districts that cannot maintain six feet of distance between students can just put “additional modifications in place.”*
- *Clarifying Statement: while the guidelines do include the language quoted above, the guidelines also require districts to adjust their protocols and learning model structures according to [Regional COVID-19 Risk Levels](#), which also impact the [COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria](#). The State requires districts to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff, and provides tools for districts and boards of health to utilize at the local level to meet that requirement. Any adjustment to protocols as significant as social distancing must be made in context of regional health factors.*

# Misconceptions (3 of 3)

- **Learning Models: Other Districts**

- Misleading Statement: *districts all around us are able to get their kids in (every day/full days/eating lunch/etc.).*
- Clarifying Statement: *while it is true that there are some districts that are able to have students in every day for full days, the reality is that the vast majority of districts across the state are either hybrid or fully remote.*

- **Adherence to Health Protocols: Other Districts**

- Misleading Statement: *(fill-in-the-name) district near us has all in-person learners in every day; therefore, so can Paramus.*
- Clarifying Statement: *the individual circumstances of each district cannot be ignored. As just one representative example, there is a Bergen County elementary school often referenced as having been able to bring in all students every day; while it does indeed have all students in every day, its physical classroom sizes coupled with traditionally lower enrollment numbers enables the school to maintain six feet of social distance between kids at all times.*



# District Reopening: Mid-Year Assessment

- **Restart and Recovery Committees**
  - Review of experiences through present
  - Exploration of options for continued movement toward increasing in-person learning
  - Development of community feedback survey
- **Paramus Community Survey**
  - [Virtual Mondays](#)
  - [Cohort Merging](#)



# Path Forward: Overview

- **Health-Focused Learning Model Phases**

- The updated phase process has been developed based on the following:
  - Feedback from the community, faculty/staff, and the district's Restart and Recovery Committees.
  - Careful analysis of the [most up-to-date guidelines](#) from the New Jersey Department of Health.
  - Collaboration with the Paramus Board of Health and the Paramus District Physician.
  - The goal as stated at the start of the school year to phase students back into in-person learning in a manner that is safe and responsible for all members of the school community.
- Timelines for progress through the phases identified on the following slides will be determined by health data, including the [COVID-19 Activity Level Report](#) in conjunction with the [COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix](#).
- Accordingly, depending on the status of the pandemic at the time, the district may need to adjust learning models according to changes in the regional risk level.

# Path Forward: Phase 2

- **Phase 2 (Regional Risk Level: Orange)**
  - Key characteristics
    - Cohorts are merged in grade levels in which social distancing can be maintained.
    - Virtual Mondays remain.
  - Process
    - Each student must commit to a learning model (hybrid or full-remote) by no later than March 1, 2021. Parents/guardians will be able to select this option in the Genesis Parent Portal beginning February 23, 2021.
    - After March 1, no changes in learning model will be allowed for the duration of Phase 2.
    - Eligible grade levels will be identified based on the learning model choice data and announced during the week of March 1.
    - In-person learners within the eligible grade levels will begin in-person learning four days a week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) on March 9, 2021.
    - Unless they are not feeling well, in-person learners cannot opt for “Present-Remote” days.
      - In-person learners with two unexcused “Present-Remote” days must switch to full-remote for the duration of Phase 2.

# Path Forward: Phase 3

- **Phase 3 (Regional Risk Level: **Yellow** for a duration of two consecutive weeks)**
  - Key characteristics
    - Cohorts across the district are merged.
    - Virtual Mondays eliminated.
    - Depending on in-person learning participation, social distancing may be less than six feet.
  - Process
    - Monitor the weekly [COVID-19 Activity Level Report](#) (published by the NJDOH each Thursday).
    - If the region is at yellow/moderate risk for two consecutive weeks:
      - Notification is sent to community the next day (Friday).
      - Parents/guardians must commit to a learning model (hybrid or full-remote) by no later than the following Tuesday. Parents/guardians will be able to select this option in the Genesis Parent Portal beginning the Friday they are notified of the option.
      - After that Tuesday, no changes in learning model will be allowed for the duration of Phase 3.
    - Remaining cohorts will be merged effective the second Monday following parent/guardian selection of learning model.
      - **Hypothetical Example:**
        - ***Hypothetically***, region is at yellow/moderate risk for the second consecutive week on Thursday, March 18. Community is notified on Friday, March 19. Parents/guardians must make final learning model selection by Tuesday, March 23. In-person learners will begin in-person learning five days a week on Monday, April 5.
    - Unless they are not feeling well, in-person learners cannot opt for “Present-Remote” days.
      - In-person learners with two unexcused “Present-Remote” days must switch to full-remote for the duration of Phase 3.

# Path Forward: Regional Risk Level

- **COVID-19 Activity Level Report**
  - Three Indicators
    - Case Rate
    - Percent CLI (COVID-like illness)
    - Percent Positivity
  - Each indicator contains an activity level value which is assigned a corresponding score (1 - 4)
  - An overall CALI (COVID-19 Activity Level Index) score for the region is then determined based on the average scores of the three indicators
- **Current Trends: Northeast Region (Bergen, Essex, and Hudson Counties)**
  - CALI Scores (December 5 - February 13)
    - Chart (with trend lines)