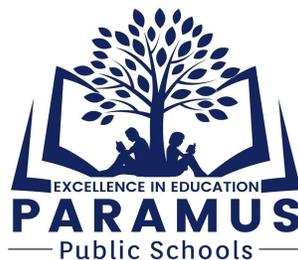


Office of the Superintendent  
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January 8, 2021

Dear Paramus Community,

As you are aware, the Paramus Board of Health, in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Health, recommended that the district implement a full-remote learning model until at least the middle of January; accordingly, the district identified January 19, 2021, as the target date for our return to in-person learning. As discussed in my Community Updates ([November 25, 2020](#) and [December 5, 2020](#)) and my [December 14, 2020 public presentation](#) to the Paramus Board of Education, the primary reason for the decision to transition the entire district to a full-remote learning model was due to the continued and significant increase in the number and frequency of COVID-19 cases within the overall Paramus community. As per New Jersey Department of Health guidelines, these numbers resulted in Paramus exceeding the minimum criteria to be considered at “very high risk” (or red) and compelled the district to follow the Paramus Board of Health recommendation to adhere to the existing NJDOH guidelines.

This week, I met with the Paramus Board of Health to review the status of the school district in relation to the January 19, 2021 target return date. In addition to the data connected to COVID-19 cases within the overall community, the meeting focused on the impact of the most up-to-date guidelines from the New Jersey Department of Health. As has been the case on numerous occasions throughout this school year, the NJDOH has updated its [guidelines for local boards of health for K-12 schools](#) to reflect its evolving understanding of the virus, how it spreads, and its impact on larger communities. Included in the revisions made to the guidelines was the **removal** of the mandate that school districts transition to full-remote learning when their region enters the “very high risk” (or red) category.

In consideration of this significant update to the NJDOH guidance, the continuing rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program within Paramus, and the enhanced health and safety protocols implemented by the district, the Paramus Board of Health is keeping its recommendation that schools return to in-person learning activities according to the original timeline. As Superintendent, I have made the decision to follow this recommendation. **Therefore, barring any unforeseen circumstances, the full Paramus Public School District will return to its hybrid in-person learning model as initially projected on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.** In addition, certain members of our student population will begin transitioning into their school buildings during the week of January 11, 2021, as will certain athletic programs. Members of these student populations will be contacted separately regarding the details of these transitions.

While this news is certainly positive for our students, staff, and families who have been eagerly looking forward to their return to the classroom, I would be remiss if I did not communicate to everyone that not only does the most recent [COVID-19 Activity Level Report](#) reveal that the entire State of New Jersey remains in the “high risk” (or orange) category, the numbers in the larger Paramus community remain at levels well above those of our overall region. Therefore, although the NJDOH has revised its guidelines to allow districts to remain open during periods of high levels of COVID-19 activity in their communities, we may continue to see entire grade levels within our individual school buildings, or even entire school buildings within our overall district, forced to cycle through periods of closures and reopenings as our students and staff quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals.



Also, please carefully review the important additional informational items below:

- **Restart Committees**

- As communicated in the [December 14, 2020 public presentation](#), applicable committees from the district's overall [Restart and Recovery Committees](#) will reconvene in the coming weeks to explore options for ways in which to increase the amount of in-person learning time for hybrid learners, considering updates to health guidelines (e.g., the CDC's definition of "close contact", the CDC's definition of quarantine period, etc.) as well as experiential knowledge gained throughout the course of the 2020-2021 school year. While these committees are composed of representatives from a variety of key stakeholder groups within our school community, all members of the school community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on these important initiatives through surveys distributed by the committees themselves.

- **Learning Model Transition Requests (Reminder)**

- As a reminder, the process outlined below should be followed by all parents/guardians who would like to request a change in learning models for their children (e.g., from in-person learning to full-remote or from full-remote learning to in-person). ***Unless a request was submitted after November 25, 2020, all students are scheduled to return to the learning models they were in prior to the switch to full-remote learning.***
  - The principal will be the primary point of contact for questions or concerns related to requests for changes in learning models.
  - The parent/guardian must complete and submit a [Learning Model Transition Request](#) form (a separate form for each child), which includes all pertinent information to ensure proper recordkeeping and enable the administration to support continuity of learning.
  - Upon submission of this form, the administration will create a new schedule in the requested model for the student. While the student's new schedule will be provided as soon as possible, it may take up to one week to make the necessary arrangements before the student can begin instruction in the new model.

- **Parent/Guardian Workshops (Reminder)**

- As part of our ongoing commitment to provide information and opportunities for essential learning to all members of our school community, we are offering two sets of dynamic workshops and information sessions for our parents/guardians:
  - [Raising Resilient Kids](#)
    - Paramus Public Schools, in partnership with Care Plus, NJ, will be offering virtual workshops on a monthly basis that will cover a range of topics related to the ongoing pandemic and how it may impact mental health. During these workshops, our Care Plus clinicians will provide specific strategies to help parents/guardians navigate these challenging times. The next virtual workshop in this series, titled "Overuse of Technology: Is Your Child Caught Up In A Technology Tornado?" will be offered on Wednesday, January 20th, 2021. Further information on this workshop and the remaining workshops in the series is located on the [Raising Resilient Kids: Parent/Guardian Workshop flyer](#).



- **[Community Connections Virtual Information Sessions](#)**
  - We are inviting all parents/guardians to participate in information sessions dealing with a variety of school-related topics such as pandemic-related health protocols, social-emotional learning, instructional technology, finance and budgeting, and important curriculum enhancements. These sessions will be designed to provide interested parents/guardians with additional insight into the ongoing applicability of these topics to their children’s schooling as well as to provide opportunities for them to ask questions and share comments with key members of our administrative and planning teams. If you are interested in participating in any of these sessions, please complete the [Paramus Community Connections Virtual Information Session Invitation](#).
  
- **[COVID-19 Quarantine Dashboard \(Reminder\)](#)**
  - Although members of our school community have certainly continued to be diagnosed with COVID-19 during the period of full-remote learning, the vast majority of these cases did not result in school-based quarantines due to the closure of the school buildings to in-person learning. As mentioned above, though, it is likely that additional school-based quarantines will arise once we return to in-person learning on January 19, 2021. Our district’s [COVID-19 Quarantine Dashboard](#) is located on our [Paramus Community Connections](#) website, and is updated in real-time whenever there is an exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual within any of our school buildings that results in a quarantine for students and/or staff.
  
  - While you may access and monitor the dashboard at any time, if you would like to be notified via email whenever there is an update to the dashboard, please complete the [COVID-19 Quarantine Dashboard Notification form](#). You have the option of receiving notifications for as few or as many buildings as you select on the form. Of course, anyone considered a “close contact” of a positive individual will still be directly informed by the district. **Also, please keep in mind that the numbers represented on the dashboard only include those cases that result in an in-school exposure to others.** While there are additional cases of COVID-19 positive individuals within our school community beyond those represented on the dashboard, these cases did not result in exposure to anyone within our schools and therefore are not considered “reportable” by the Department of Health.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the fact that, while the risk of developing serious or life-threatening complications from COVID-19 certainly varies according to the individual, it is imperative for both the health of all our community members and our ability to keep our schools open that we remain hypervigilant in our adherence to health and safety protocols--regardless of our individual perceptions of our own degrees of risk.

Sincerely,

Sean Adams  
Superintendent of Schools