

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

Opening Day Montclair Public Schools

(Montclair, N.J., September 9, 2021) – This morning Montclair Public Schools welcomed its students [back to school](#) for full-day, in-person instruction. “We have worked tirelessly to get to this moment and despite setbacks as a result of Hurricane Ida, our buildings were ready for our return,” said Superintendent Jonathan Ponds. The district was able to implement all [remediation](#) necessary to open. Ponds went on to express his gratitude to everyone who helped make this day possible. “Especially in the weeks leading to our opening, I was so thankful for the never-ending support of the Board of Education, my administrators, staff, Buildings and Grounds personnel, Township officials, Mayor’s Office and Police, Fire and Community Service departments.”

Even the rain could not dampen the spirits of our students, families and staff who were eager to start the school year. I was lucky to have the opportunity to travel from school to school to see everyone following protocol and excited to engage in teaching and learning. Our administrators, community members, including Montclair Police and Fire Department and our Board of Education members, also took the time to greet families and give students encouragement as they headed into their buildings to begin the new school year. Here’s a glimpse of what they saw:

Dr. Felice Harrison-Crawford, Assistant Superintendent of Operations and School Support Services, visited Nishuane and Hillside as students and families gathered on the lawn. “Both schools had wonderful, colorful signs greeting our families,” she said. “Children and parents followed masking and social distance guidelines, and staff was on hand to welcome everyone back.”

Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction Kalisha Morgan, checked-in at Glenfield and Buzz Aldrin Middle Schools and Montclair High School. “The students were excited to be back in school and I would like to thank the school leaders and staff for going above and beyond to ensure that all classes were ready to receive students. It was a great day!” she said.

"Today was a day we have been looking forward to for so long!" said Edgemont Principal Briony Carr-Clemente. "My heart is full of joy seeing our families drop off their children at our door. It is so gratifying to walk the halls and see our teachers doing what they love to do. All of our classrooms were buzzing with excitement! I have so much gratitude for every team, at every level at MPS who made this possible."

Of course we would be remiss if we did not offer some thoughts from our students, including these from Buzz Aldrin:

"Homeroom was awesome and it was so much fun touring the school!"

"It was so great seeing all my teachers again."

"Today was so much fun! I was so happy to meet all of my new teachers and see my old teachers. Homeroom SEL was awesome too!"

"It was really nice to be able to help all the sixth graders get around the building. I enjoyed it!"

"I loved all the ice breakers and meeting new people in my homeroom."

PTA Council President Tessie Thomas said, "I never thought I would be so excited to be stuck in a car line! The energy, the joy and the rain was felt by all. We are thankful to the administration, the teachers, the staff and the families for working together to fully reopen the schools. PTAs across the schools continued their hard work every step of the way to support this reopening and a return to some normalcy. We were thrilled to see familiar faces at our welcome back coffees this morning and look forward to a fantastic year ahead!"

As this momentous day comes to a close, the district continues to address registration, transportation and technology. Ponds said, "I'd like to take this time to reiterate that we will continue to do all that is necessary to [ensure the safety](#) of our students and staff through our regular protocols, including mask-wearing and daily health checks in addition to pooled testing, vaccinations and upgrades to our facilities and ventilation systems." MPS, in partnership with Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health, will conduct a clinic for students, families and community members ages 12+, Friday, September 17, 3-6 pm at the George Inness Annex Atrium. Be on the lookout for more information coming soon.

Wrapping up the day, Bradford Principal Frances Aboushi commented, "I was not prepared for the overwhelming support, excitement and incredibly positive vibes from staff, students and the families this morning. The interaction was sorely missed on all levels—the family is back!"

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