

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

September 3, 2021

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Staff,

I hope that in the aftermath of Wednesday's storm, you and your family are safe and getting help with any remediation needed. I visited all of our schools today and particularly those that had storm damage. All the rubbish removal and repairs are proceeding on target. This would not be possible without the extraordinary efforts of our Buildings and Grounds Department and the support of Montclair's emergency team, Mayor Sean Spiller, Town Manager Timothy Stafford, Fire Chief John Herrmann and Deputy Fire Chief Brian Wilde, Police Chief Todd Conforti and Deputy Police Chief Wil Young, and the Township Community Services Department. Please see the chart at the end of my letter for repair status.

As we say goodbye to summer and head into Labor Day weekend, I can feel the excitement brewing and am thrilled to begin this new school year, fully in person and following a regular schedule! We are [implementing procedures](#) to ensure the health and safety of students, staff and families. We want to open and *stay* open.

This year we unite in an intentional, clear "True North" to propel our district towards excellence. Restructuring reading intervention strategies; developing district-wide, consistent interventions; exploring the "Science of Reading" concepts; ensuring we have reading and math specialists in our buildings; restructuring Special Education; and using Acadience, a new assessment tool, are all in progress. Here's a partial look at professional development designed with our "True North" in mind, *All Kids can Learn and All Kids are Special*.

- Our teachers and staff received two days of professional development in social emotional and mental health support during their first days back, and we will continue to provide opportunities to further this training throughout the year.
- Building leaders, Central Office supervisors and all Child Study Team members will be receiving training and guidance in developing IEPs.
- The entire district, at all levels, will be engaging in Culturally Responsive Training. Grounding ourselves in culturally responsive thoughts and actions ensures that our students and families will feel valued, heard and find the strength to grow and succeed while embracing their differences.

Registration/Placement

For families who completed registration by the end of the day yesterday, their children will start school Sept. 9. Families who registered today will begin school on Sept. 13.

Meet New and Familiar Faces

I am confident that [our appointments](#) will add to our talented team of educators and administrators who stand ready to serve in a thoughtful, enthusiastic and energetic manner. Please join me in extending congratulations and a warm welcome to them!

District Highlights

At the Board retreat meeting July 14, I provided a [presentation](#) that outlined numerous district accomplishments. A few extra highlights and work in progress:

Technology: Thanks to the tremendous work of our Technology Department and NJ State and Federal funding, **all students** in Montclair Public Schools (K-12) will receive their very own Chromebooks. We are officially a 1:1 District!

Reimagining Special Education

With the Special Education audit as a foundational tool, we will be restructuring Special Education organization and services to implement thoughtful and consistent processes throughout the Pupil Services Department. This will mean a change in responsibilities for our building leaders who will be an instrumental part of your child's educational experience. They or their designees will be involved in Child Study Team meetings and Intervention and Referral Services to allow for an inclusive service model.

Additionally, we are assessing the need for [compensatory education](#) for all students with IEPs and 504 accommodations by using district data to determine if academic and/or related services were missed this past year. If services were missed, IEP teams would convene to develop a compensatory education plan that includes appropriate instruction, services and progress monitoring. Your case manager can assist you with specific questions regarding your child's IEP.

Food Service: The district is participating in the [National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option](#) to provide free meals for all students during the 2021-2022 school year. **All students** will be able to receive free breakfast and lunch at no charge regardless of need. The Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals is still available and is used to determine eligibility for P-EBT benefits, State, and Federal funding. We encourage you to complete the Free/Reduced Meal Application to see if you qualify for additional benefits.

Virtual Field Trips: Our students experienced virtual field trips to the Montclair Art Museum, Montclair Historical Society, Yogi Berra Museum and more. These trips gave students an opportunity to enjoy fun, educational places without time or transportation constraints.

Summer Programs: This summer we were able to provide opportunities for continued learning for K-12 students. More than 600 students participated in these programs that focused on K-8 Math and ELA while also infusing social emotional learning activities. Montclair High School continued to provide credit recovery courses in multiple subject areas and also offered summer enrichment courses that extended into physical education and the arts.

Finally, please be sure to check your Parent Access accounts for all pertinent forms and information for your children. Schools will be sending messages via School Messenger as well.

For those of you celebrating Rosh Hashanah, I wish you a happy new year filled with good health, happiness, and peace.

I can't wait to visit our schools in person on September 9 to greet you and our students! Together, let's focus on our well-being and make this year an exceptional one for learning and growing!

Sincerely,
 Dr. Jonathan Ponds
 Superintendent

Update on Repairs from Hurricane Ida

Building/School	Damages	Remediation Update for 9/3/21
Bradford	Boiler room flooded and electrical panel was damaged	All water is drained out. Electrical panels are removed. Switches are drying out. PSE&G will inspect on Tuesday. Cleaning and disinfecting are in progress in the boiler and electrical room.
Edgemont	Tree fell at the back end of the gym	The tree has been removed. A scissor lift will be transported to Edgemont for a structural engineer to inspect the gym on Tuesday. The rest of the building can be occupied.
DLC	A leak caused damage to the fire panel	Fire alarm panel is ordered and will be installed and programmed on Tuesday.
Hillside	Ground floor flooded	All water has been removed. Cleaning and disinfecting are in progress.
MHS	Basement and the Pit flooded	All water has been removed. All debris is being discarded. Cleaning and disinfecting are in progress. Construction damage is being assessed and repaired.

