



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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KENDRA V. JOHNSON, J.D., ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

March 11, 2019

Greetings Montclair Public Schools' Parents and Guardians;

The shining sun, the smell of tulips and the sight of graduation robes are in my thoughts. What about you? Let's all declare together: spring is on its way! To promote ongoing discourse relative to positive, open and honest home-school connections, please note:

- **March is Wellness Month:** We, the Montclair Public Schools community, are challenging each other to various wellness efforts. Accordingly, we extend the challenge to the larger community:
 - Motivational Mondays:** Walk around your workplace for at least 30 minutes
 - Tracking Tuesdays:** Record your steps and hold yourself accountable
 - Water Wednesdays:** Drink at least 32 ounces of water
 - Thoughtful Thursdays:** Engage in at least one mindfulness activity
 - Fit Fridays:** Strive for at least one hour of physical activity
- **Community Learning:** In an effort to learn and grow as a community, we will routinely schedule forums, partner with community leaders and send out information to keep you informed. To that end, please see the attached communications:
 - **Updated Montclair Public Schools' Community Learning Flyer (See attached with the revised Danger of Gendering date)**
 - **Montclair Community Council for Young Children Flyer (See attached. A special highlight of this event will be the guest speaker, Frances Aboushi, Glenfield Middle School teacher and House Leader)**
 - **Community Learning Flyer from a Community Leader Succeed2Gether (See attached)**
 - **Momo Challenge Letter** – Last Thursday, I sent a letter to all families/guardians in an effort to norm a topic and provide the **one, sole** recommendation, which was to promote parents/guardians to engage in ongoing discussions with their child(ren) regarding social media. Some parents/guardians have shared that my original message did not clearly state that the Momo Challenge was a hoax and that the original challenge was in fact inaccurate. Therefore, I want to state unequivocally that, from all reliable accounts and sources, the Momo Challenge is in fact a hoax and indeed is not true. To that end, the purpose of my original communication was to:

- Inform families of this topic as some students were/are watching the Momo Challenge YouTube videos, discussing the challenge on social media, and some of our students may not know the challenge is a hoax and not true,
- Discuss the importance of social media oversight with parents/guardians as some unhealthy social emotional activity emerges from social media exchanges, and
- Create an ongoing dialogue relative to safe and orderly topics (multiple Superintendents sent similar letters to keep their school communities informed).

My ultimate goal is to keep you up to date. We are partners and effective home-school connections require ongoing engagement. I will continue to keep you informed of emerging topics, trends and issues. And, I certainly reflect on my communications, so that as many people as possible walk away with a shared understanding of the intended message.

- **Weather-related School Delays and Closings:** The decision to delay or close school is very textured. (See attached letter, available for your review.)
- **Attendance:** Attendance expectations are governed by New Jersey state law. Should you have questions, please review the link below. We must enforce state expectations. For your convenience here is the link to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) attendance overview website:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/behavior/attendance/>

We will use all available resources to ensure students are in school and learning. As you know, there are compulsory attendance laws that govern our work in public education.

- **Our District's Dance Program:** We have a plan in place to ensure our Dance program continues to thrive. To achieve this work, we will need to make some internal shifts in policy and practice which we plan to do this spring. We are thankful to our New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) leaders for assisting us as critical friends of our program and create a win-win solution that is both compliant with state standards and honors the traditions of Montclair Public Schools.
- **Budget 2019-2020:** Our 2019-2020 budget materials are available on our District website at:
https://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/departments/business_office/budget_2019-2020.

We appreciate all of the engagement to date. It is important to note that our 2019-2020 state aid allocation was more than flat funding (+\$177,000); however, the allocation is lower than the state aid formula allows (over \$2 million less). We are challenged to continue our robust programming in this significantly leaner fiscal climate. To this end, all areas of the budget were reduced to balance our budget:

Central Office, Technology, Facilities, school-based allocations and staffing (Central Office and school-based staff).

- **Montclair High School:** In an effort to keep all engaged, Principal Grosso is slated to release the draft schedule for May 20, 2019 through the end of the school year. Your feedback is appreciated. As a reminder, effective May 20 the Main Building will be closed (no access for students, parents/guardians or staff – no exceptions). Furthermore, the graduation venue is confirmed. The sunshine location is the amphitheater. The rain location is being finalized. Information regarding tickets is forthcoming.
- **Eyeglasses Recycling Effort:** Montclair Public Schools will begin an eyeglasses recycling effort for parents/guardians to donate old eyeglasses. You will receive a communication from your child’s school in the near future. This is another creative effort led by our District’s outstanding school nurses under the leadership of Supervisor Betty Strauss.
- **Field Trips in Montclair:** Please take note that effective immediately, we will not send nurses on field trips that are taking place in Montclair. Instead, if an emergency is needed, we will call on the school nurse closest to the field trip location.
- **“Great by Design” work underway:** In an effort to ensure services and programs, the following works are being planned:
 - A Montclair Public Schools’ 504 Handbook is being created to ensure we are normed about the 504 process. To date, there appears to be some disconnects between what is required under this access law.
 - A Tutoring Central webpage is being created to house all of the in-District tutoring services available. This webpage will include District-sponsored tutoring efforts as well as District partners who offer tutoring services.
- All Superintendent “all district” communications can be found at:
https://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/departments/superintendent/collaborations_and_communications

Thank you for your ongoing engagement. Together, we will continue our collective work of **Great by Design: We are #Montclair Proud.**

Respectfully,



Kendra Johnson, J.D., Ed.D.
Superintendent