



Summer Update #3: Preliminary Plans

July 24, 2020

Dear School Community,

I know these are anxious times for many families as you await answers about what the new school year will hold. I assure you that our restart committees are developing plans as thoughtfully and thoroughly as possible.

As your superintendent, I'm devoted to protecting the health and safety of the nearly 2,000 individuals who make up our school community. However, I also understand your concerns on a personal level: I am the dad of an incoming kindergartner. I'm devoted to protecting my daughter's health and safety, too. And, no matter what school model my home district adopts, I know my child's introduction to school will be altered by the pandemic.

We might not be able to control many of our current circumstances, but as a district, we will respond to them in the best interest of our students and staff.

Our Belief System

As I reviewed the preliminary findings of our nine committees, a set of guiding principles emerged. These principles are the basis for our decision-making and represent our belief system.

- **We believe** the physical health of our school community members is our top priority.
- **We believe** we must continue to provide a rigorous academic program that provides for the continuity of learning.
- **We believe** it's our responsibility to tend to the social and emotional needs of our students and staff.
- **We believe** in equitable access to technology.
- **We believe** that if we can safely account for athletics and extracurricular activities, we need to provide them for the whole-child experience.

Extra Support

Our schools have additional needs during this time, and we've hired staff to help address new responsibilities.

Two custodians will be added expressly to ensure that high-touch areas such as handrails, doorknobs and bathrooms are cleaned throughout the day. **Another school nurse** will join the team as part of our focus on wellness. And a new **technology facilitator** will be key to coaching teachers and ensuring any distance-learning initiatives are as user-friendly and effective as possible for both students and staff. We'll be relying on our technology facilitator to enhance distance learning and support the rollout of our 1:1 Chromebook effort at Brearley Middle-High School.

Additionally, we are about to enter into an agreement with [CarePlus](#) to provide enhanced behavioral health assistance by equipping our schools with clinicians who will offer **social and emotional support for students and faculty**.

Safety Measures

The school district has been focused on the learning and facilities requirements for reopening while awaiting further guidance from the medical community. **District leaders are in regular contact with public health officials** and neighboring districts, and anticipate using those connections to develop screening and response protocols before the start of the school year. We will communicate those to parents through an email and our website.

Daily screenings will be part of our school health protocols. We'll have more information in August about how pre-screening and symptom check protocols will work. Once inside school buildings, all staff members and visitors (over 2 years old) are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health. This is a requirement issued by the NJ Department of Education.



Students are required to wear facial coverings when social distancing cannot be maintained, (unless doing so would inhibit the students' health.) Such instances will include when they are entering and exiting the buildings, when they are in the hallways and when they are, or a peer is, moving about the classroom.

We will continue to confer with our health officials and school physician to discuss best practices around facial coverings. Please be aware that as a result of their expert input, this is subject to change.

Time will be allotted for extra hand-washing during the day. Our planning also takes **emotional health** into account. Students can expect breaks from facial coverings and time for movement and mindfulness.

Lunch & Childcare

Childcare will be available; more details will be offered as they take shape. Unless your child is staying for after-care, **lunch will not be part of the school day**. Even with staggered schedules, our schools could not hold lunch periods within social-distancing guidelines. All students will have access to a “grab-and-go” lunch, and free and reduced-price lunches will be made available for those who [qualify](#).

Distance Learning

We are preparing to **enhance distance learning**, with targeted efforts on both [synchronous and asynchronous](#) instruction. (Click on the link to learn more about the differences between each, along with examples.) Our reopening committee that’s focused on curriculum and instruction is currently engaged in this work.

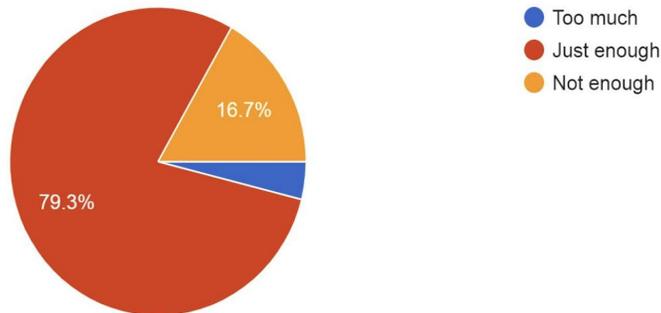
Teacher, parent and student responses to our Distance Learning Survey will also help shape our approach.

Some highlights from the survey:

- More than 80% of students in grades 5-12 said they were able to manage the change to distance learning.
- Staff members identified the opportunity to think “outside the box” as an advantage, but student attendance was the highest reported issue.
- More than 40% of parents identified live or pre-recorded lessons as the most helpful elements to support their child’s distance learning.
- We’ll continue to use, and enhance, our use of learning management systems like Google Classroom and Seesaw, as well as other tools such as Screencastify, Flipgrid, and others to strengthen the distance-learning experience.

[See the full survey report here.](#)

The communication during distance learning I am receiving from my child's school is:
406 responses



Early Look: Pre-K-6

We are **aiming** to open Harding Elementary School to students every day on a modified schedule, which will roughly follow a half-day schedule with no lunch or recess.

Our already reasonable class sizes will make the in-person model possible. If needed, we will reassign personnel to create additional grade-level sections and clear out non-essential classroom equipment and furniture to open up space. There will be slightly staggered start times for drop-offs and pick-ups. Additionally, parents will need to follow a sort of “kiss-and-go” protocol to avoid congregation.



There will be an all-remote learning option for Harding students who need to stay home. Gov. Phil Murphy announced earlier this week that he will soon provide guidance allowing for parents to choose all-remote learning. We'll share details on how we'll implement the guidelines once they are released.

Early Look: Grades 7 -12

We'll adopt a schedule for cohorts (learning groups) of students that provides a balance of in-person instruction and distance learning each week. Schools will roughly follow a modified, half-day schedule with no lunch.

There will be an all-remote learning option for Brearley students who need to stay home. Gov. Phil Murphy announced earlier this week that he will soon provide guidance allowing for parents to choose all-remote learning. We'll share details on how we'll implement the guidelines once

they are released.

Special Education/Student Personnel Services

Special-education programming will be dictated by the Individual Education Plan (IEP) of each child. Students who are identified as having special needs will receive services with as little disruption as possible. IEP meetings will be held as needed. For example, parents who opt for remote learning will have an IEP meeting to determine how their child's programming needs will be met through a distance format.

Please note: Virtual SEPAG Meeting via Zoom on July 28th at 6 pm- link will be sent via broadcast early next week.

Please contact Dawn Cuccolo, Director of Student and Personnel Services with any concerns or questions about individual students.

Parents of **students with 504 Plans** may also opt for virtual instruction. Individual 504 Plans will be adjusted as needed beginning in September.

Tell Us Your Plans

We've shared details about how our reopening model is forming for the express purpose of helping you plan for September.

I ask that you **COMPLETE THIS SURVEY BY TUESDAY,**

JULY 28. While your responses are non-binding, we need to gauge your preliminary intentions about whether or not you intend to return your child to school in September, based on our preliminary plans, so that we can continue our planning efforts. **PLEASE COMPLETE ONE SURVEY FOR EACH CHILD YOU HAVE IN THE DISTRICT.** We are looking for 100 percent participation.



I want to firmly reiterate that the aforementioned information is tentative and subject to change. There will be more information to come, including FAQs and a series of comprehensive Fact Sheets from each committee, by early August. Those FAQs and Fact Sheets will detail our full Return-to-School Plan.

We will continue to form our strategy by analyzing the latest information available in this evolving situation. I will share another update with more complete details in the first week of August.

Stay healthy & well.

Sincerely,

[Kyle C. Arlington](#)

Superintendent of Schools