



Kenilworth Public Schools
Kyle C. Arlington
Superintendent of Schools

August 28, 2020

Dear School Community:

Our road to reopening has been a long process, and every time we think the path is defined, another hurdle appears. The latest hurdle is one of numbers, and I'm compelled to share that we might not be able to overcome it by Sept. 9. It's possible that Kenilworth will not have enough teachers to meet the needs we defined as part of our reopening plan.

This potential problem is emblematic of the struggles we have faced, and the Kenilworth team will continue doing our best to navigate and communicate.

Our Journey Since Spring

This spring the state directed us to go remote, and we did. Then the state said, "bring students back in person," and we scrutinized every aspect of Kenilworth's operations to submit a very detailed plan for doing that. Then, the mandate was to "provide an all-remote option." Most recently, we were told a district can start the school year as all-remote, if it cannot meet a [checklist of health and safety standards](#).

Kenilworth can check all the boxes on the state's reopening checklist that the NJ Department of Education requires -- because we worked really hard to be able to do so. We were given a mandate, and we met it. We've been listening equally to people who want in-person instruction, and people who want all-remote instruction, and our plan offered options for each group.

We know COVID-19 is more of a health risk for certain people. We have received a significant number of requests from teachers who can lawfully present information and request accommodations based on their personal circumstances. As a result, we changed assignments so some of our faculty could work remotely.

Currently, about 16% of our faculty members have submitted the required documentation and plan to work remotely or take leaves of absence. We are carefully monitoring the number of new accommodation requests we are receiving daily. Subject-specific skills and teacher certifications influence our ability to be flexible, so this process is not as easy as shifting one teacher into another position. That also means there's no "magic number" of accommodations that would force us to return to full remote instruction.

Our Intentions for Writing

We share this news not to cause alarm, or to cast aspersions on teachers, but to continue the goal of open communication that we've pursued over these challenging months. We're proud of the way we've shared news throughout the summer, and also of the fact that we have carefully followed the rules and met or exceeded the mandates by the Governor and the NJ Department of Education.

Meeting social distancing guidelines by reducing class sizes requires enough faculty members -- and those numbers play an inflexible role in our ability to reopen. As always, I will keep you informed of any developments that change our reopening plan.

In addition to schedule adjustments and a combination of in-person and remote learning, we have to contend with other concessions to meet the state's direction to reopen and the community's desire to do so. (Our survey showed 70% of students plan to attend school in-person.)

- A few courses in the middle and upper grades may be taught by a teacher who is not on-site, even though the students are. In those scenarios, students would be in a classroom along with a certified teacher or aide, while the teacher for that subject directs instruction live via video. Because some of our teachers have been reassigned from in-person instruction, we expect to have a few of these scenarios.
- In less than a handful of In-Class Resource classes at Harding (which include a special education teacher and general education teacher working in tandem), the special education teacher may work remotely. Students will still have a certified teacher guiding lessons in-person, while the other teacher participates live via video. In these rooms, there will be an aide to support both teachers. Parents of those special education students will be notified directly in the upcoming days.

More Information; New Information!

We have made a true effort to provide information quickly, completely and accurately. We've done that through emails to parents, information on our [website](#), and the district's [Facebook page](#). In case you missed something, here are some of the newest sources.

- We compiled responses to many of the questions posed at the special Board of Education meeting on Aug. 24, [and they are part of a new collection of FAQs](#).
- In addition to our extensive written [Fact Sheets](#), we recorded informational videos to talk through some of the details. One reviews the [health and safety equipment](#) that makes up the District's Back-to-School supplies. Another highlights key points in [the academic plan](#), with a focus on the current remote learning option and the potential for a return to district-wide remote learning.

Thank You

Your patience and understanding has never been appreciated more than right now, as we manage a very fluid situation with factors not in our control. I'm at my computer or on the phone most of the day to work through these issues. I understand that a late change in our reopening plan would cause significant disruption to households (and those words don't adequately represent the situation). At this point, I can only keep you informed while I work with the Kenilworth team to keep overcoming hurdles.

Stay healthy & well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyle C. Arlington". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kyle C. Arlington
Superintendent of Schools