

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District
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February 19, 2021

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents,

Last week and this week, the COVID-19 report showed that our Central West region was in the yellow. Using data from the [COVID-19 reports](#) and [guidelines by the CDC](#), we have been making plans and having discussions with Board Members, building administrators, FREA Leadership, School Pandemic Teams, and local health officials to open our doors wider for students to return to school.

As the Hunterdon County area holds in the yellow for moderate transmission, I will recommend additional mitigation strategies to support an increase in Pre-K-8 in-person learning modes. If we are in the yellow again next week that moves us closer to a possible combination of combining cohorts and considering places where six-foot distancing may not be maximized. We have our sights set on mid-March with a date close to the first day of the third trimester to combine cohorts and bring students back for five days of instruction. This is dependent upon conditions continuing to move in the right direction and obtaining the additional required mitigation tools for an increase in in-person learning.

My recommendation to alter our current in-person schedule will be to return students to school five days a week by combining cohorts and continuing to operate on a half-day schedule. The move to five days of in-person learning for those families that choose in-person learning for their child will require schedule changes and a myriad of alterations to what students and families have been accustomed to since October. I offer some bullets of information in the letter below.

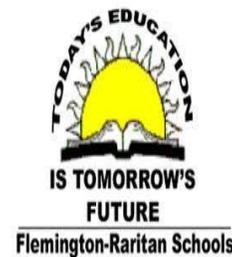
If we continue to see the region stay in the yellow and all indications are pointing in the right direction, meaning the case rate continues to decrease, percent positivity rates decrease, hospital rates decrease for the number of COVID-like illnesses, and our COVID score remaining in the yellow, I will make recommendations to alter our current in-person schedule. To provide a recommended mitigation strategy, the District will provide plexiglass dividers for every student and all faculty and staff members' desks at all schools in the district.

The Board of Education is considering revising Policy 1648- Restart and Recover Plan to include the wording from the [New Jersey Road Back to Recovery Plan](#), *"Schools and districts must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This can be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 6 feet apart and considering the flow of student traffic around the room."* You can find that policy here <https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=1648&search=COVID&id=ca89f6c80de04b0fa6a75266e9cf8f26> The Board is reviewing guidelines and continues to analyze multiple sources of information including the newly revised CDC guidelines. If the policy is revised, a transition toward more in-person learning will mean:

Cohorts and Co-mingling

- An "all-virtual option" would continue to be offered to parents who select an all virtual option for their child.
- Cohort A and B would be co-mingled, which could reduce our ability to provide six-foot social distancing.
- Co-mingling with other cohorts/classes would continue to be minimized, as much as possible. However, some students will move between classes.
- There will be substitutes hired for some classrooms to provide supervision for those faculty members that need to teach virtually due to medical accommodations.

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Rotation

- The weekly rotation of Cohort A and Cohort B would not be necessary.
- Schedules would likely return to our “normal” Days 1-6 and Day A/B rotations.

Instruction

- With larger class sizes, we would resume full-scale intervention services to support struggling learners. Therefore, in grades K-4, Science and Social Studies would resume being taught by the homeroom teacher.
- A possibility of a discontinuation of virtual “check-in” times and Counselor Corner at the end of the elementary day.
- Modifications to “specials/related arts” would be needed to prevent co-mingling and sharing of instructional materials - to the greatest extent possible.
- Livestreaming (i.e., broadcasting) instruction will be necessary for some classrooms to support students that are all virtual or quarantined due to exposure.

Length of Day and Lunch (At this time we are not considering a full-day schedule)

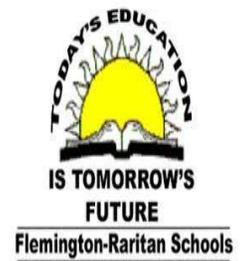
- Larger class sizes and lack of social distancing may increase the risk of spread in grades K-4 (where lunch is currently occurring) and in grades 5-8 (where lunch is not occurring).
- Possible mitigation steps:
 - Shortened lunch period (20 minutes) or eliminate lunch altogether while students are at school.
 - Utilize classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, auditoriums, lobby areas for dining to ensure social distancing when masks are off.. Ensure spaces are well-ventilated.
 - Possibly hire additional cafeteria aides and additional custodial staff.

We continue to move forward with planning for the remainder of the school year and the 2021-2022 school year. Our plans are for a traditional school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year with full in-person learning for all students in a traditional schedule. Below is information about kindergarten registration.

Kindergarten Registration: Kindergarten registration packets will be available in each elementary school foyer for pick up and can be completed and dropped off from February 22-25, 2021. Due to COVID-19, in-person registration will not be held. Please contact your incoming kindergarten school's main office for more information. We are hopeful for an in-person kindergarten orientation in August.

In-person Learning and All Remote Learning Preferences: As explained in the November 6, 2020 letter to parents, a request must be made to the building principal for a student to transition to in-person learning or to fully remote learning. Please let us know if you are planning to send your child to in-person learning or if you plan to switch your child to an all-virtual learner. This is important for our planning. Contact your child's building principal by Monday, February 22, to request to transition from in-person learning to fully remote or vice versa for the spring trimester. For details, please refer to [BOE policy 1648.02](#). As our plans develop, please know that the policies that are in place allow for some flexibility for parents that need their child to transition from in-person to all remote learning or vice versa if a parent should wish to alter their child's learning schedule after the February 22, 2021 deadline.

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Schedule Reminder: Below is the district's upcoming schedule for Grades K-8:

Date	Cohort A	Cohort B
February 22-26	In-Person	Remote Learning
March 1-5	Remote Learning	In-Person
March 8-12	In-Person	Remote Learning
March 15-19	Potential to combine Cohorts A & B, five days a week	
~Parents who selected all-virtual instruction for their child will continue with all-remote learning.~		

To continue to support the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty, our district will be appointing a “Lead Nurse” to facilitate procedures for health and safety and serve as a conduit of communication between local health officials and the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District. Each Friday I will share more information with the community on our plans to open our doors wider for students. The letters on Friday will communicate the week’s [COVID-19 report](#).

I will be presenting additional information at the Board of Education meeting on Monday, February 22. The public portion of the meeting will begin at 7 p.m. The meeting agenda, [linked here](#), includes the Zoom log in to join the online webinar.

Wishing you good health,

Dr. Kari McGann
 Superintendent of Schools