

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District
Dr. Kari McGann
Superintendent of Schools
50 Court Street, Flemington, New Jersey 08822-1300
Phone: (908) 284-7561 Fax: (908) 284-7656
kmcgann@frsd.k12.nj.us



May 21, 2021

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents, Faculty, Staff, and Community Members,

As of Monday, nineteen days remain in the 2020-2021 school year! Since the earliest days of the pandemic last March, we have planned, prepared, and put into place safety protocols to be able to provide in-person learning. This has been no small feat but with safety measures in place such as mask-wearing, physical distancing, and good ventilation, we were able to open our school doors for in-person learning beginning in September and have continually opened our school doors wider for students. Currently, 80 percent of our students are attending school in person.

Schools will be open for students who are attending school in person or all virtually on Friday, May 28. This day was originally scheduled as an emergency snow day. Schools will be closed for all students, staff, and faculty on Monday, May 31, for Memorial Day.

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is moving forward to address the drawbacks of students not attending school for in-person learning and full days of instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies have shown that more than half of educators at U.S. public schools reported “significant loss of learning” among students over the past year, and another 44 percent reported “some loss,”¹ according to a March report by the [Horace Mann Educators Corporation](#). In Flemington-Raritan Regional School District we know that there may be a gap not only in academics, but in social-emotional learning as well. A study by the McKinsey & Company Foundation² reported that the learning loss is especially high for students of color, who were about three to five months behind at the beginning of school last fall, compared to three months for white students. [Last week’s letter to parents](#) spoke about our focus on responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District expects to receive funding through the American Rescue Plan thanks to a pandemic relief package. We are planning for large-scale initiatives³-- like offering small-group tutoring or extending the school day or year-- that research indicates could help students catch up after months of disrupted learning. A community committee composed of parents, educators, administrators, faculty and staff members will be gathered to develop recommendations on ways to use the funds to help students who need it most. The American Rescue Plan requires that districts use at least 20 percent of the funding appropriated to the district to address learning loss⁴. At this time we have not yet been notified of the exact amount that the district will receive, however, we expect a significant amount of funding, possibly as much as \$2,500 per student. The District will have broad latitude with the remainder of the funds to use the money for anything from buying masks to keeping teachers employed to setting up an after-school program. The District must be cautious in using the money for recurring costs-- like hiring more teachers or paying existing teachers more or putting in place additional support personnel. Recurring costs can lead to a “funding cliff” that will require painful cuts when the funding runs out in October 2024. We value your input as we

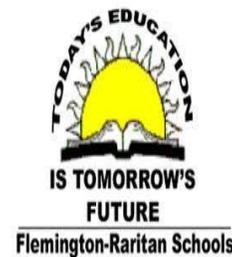
¹ <https://investors.horacemann.com/news/news-details/2021/Educators-Identify-Learning-Gaps-due-to-COVID-19-in-Horace-Mann-Study/default.aspx>

² <https://investors.horacemann.com/news/news-details/2021/Educators-Identify-Learning-Gaps-due-to-COVID-19-in-Horace-Mann-Study/default.aspx>

³ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/3/10/22323283/congress-biden-stimulus-money-education-schools> New

⁴ <https://www.nj.gov/education/esser/#:~:text=In%20March%202021%2C%20The%20American,of%20COVID%2D19%20on%20schools.>

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look to thoughtfully appropriate funds we are eligible to receive. We thank you for completing this brief survey! Survey responses are due by May 28. [You can find the survey link here.](#)

Governor Murphy's Executive Orders:

Guidance to schools has been released at a fast and furious pace beginning on Monday with Governor Murphy's announcement that New Jersey will no longer have the option to learn remotely starting in September. Governor Murphy stated that "[parents would not be enabled to broad scale opt their child out of in-person instruction as was allowed this year.](#)"⁵ Governor Murphy originally made this proclamation this past March, but then later shared that options would be available for parents to select a virtual school model and the decision would remain in the hands of individual school districts. However, according to Governor Murphy, the virtual school option will end in September, 2021 because portions of Executive Order 175 will be rescinded which allows for parents to opt-out of in-person instruction. This means that there will not be remote learning emergency snow days, but rather remote learning will only be permitted in the event if there is a localized outbreak or other emergencies. We look forward to welcoming back all of our students, faculty, and staff for full in-person instruction in the fall.

Following Monday's announcement about the virtual school option ending before the next school year, on Tuesday, May 17th, Governor Murphy signed an Executive Order eliminating the mask requirement in outdoor public spaces. However, at the bottom of page 6 on the Executive Order, on item number 2, the Executive Order notes that "outdoor public spaces do not include child care centers, other child care facilities, youth summer camps, and public, private, and parochial preschool program premises, and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools. Current recommendations and requirements regarding masking in those settings will remain in effect." You can find the full Executive Order at this link [here](#)⁶.

In short, according to Governor Murphy, our students, faculty, and staff still have to have their masks on when they are outside and not socially distanced. Our weather this week has been quite warm and keeping the masks on while indoors is difficult for our students. When students go outside for a mask break, students will be socially distanced so they can take their masks off. Our schools have plenty of shaded outdoor areas so they can be in the shade when outside socially distanced.

Governor Murphy continues to mandate Executive Order 192 requiring that "all individuals shall continue to wear face coverings in indoor workplaces." On May 17th, he ultimately said that masks/face coverings remain a requirement indoors in New Jersey, except for in special circumstances such as a private function. This means that all staff, students, and faculty will be required to wear an appropriate face covering when entering our school buildings. You can find that press release [here](#)⁷.

Then on Wednesday and Thursday this week, Governor Murphy lifted travel restrictions stating that New Jersey will no longer require individuals to quarantine when returning to New Jersey after domestic travel. He emphasized travelers to be cautious, use good judgment, and follow CDC recommendations⁸. Therefore, our district will no longer require students traveling from a destination within the United States to quarantine upon their return home regardless of vaccine status. Parents, staff, and faculty will notice that the screening form no longer has questions pertaining to

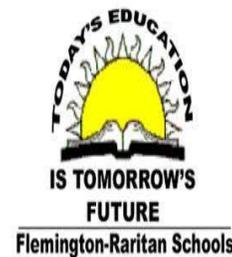
⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/world/nj-schools-covid-virtual.html>

⁶ <https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-241.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210517d.shtml>

⁸ <https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2021/may/19/NJDOHTravelandMaskingClarificationsforK-12Schools.pdf>

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travel. All other questions remain and must be completed prior to entering the building. We strongly encourage travelers to review the [CDC recommendations](#)⁹, monitor signs and symptoms, and adhere to these guidelines when possible. You may contact your child's school nurse or principal and let them know of your travel plans and discuss quarantine. If you suspect your child or a member of your child's traveling party has been exposed to COVID-19 during your travels, please quarantine and/or get tested before returning to school. If your child needs to quarantine due to exposure or per CDC recommendations, we will support your child with remote learning via live streaming using technology.

Last week, as I reported, the New Jersey Department of Education announced that all school districts will create a Safe Return Plan by June 24 to ensure that appropriate health and safety protocols are in place. I shared information about our *From Crisis to Opportunity: Rebuilding to Improve Student Well-Being* plan in [last week's letter](#)¹⁰. We anticipate our plan will be ready to share by the end of June.

Sports Guidance:

The [NJDOH Guidance for Sports Activities](#)¹¹ does not apply to sports-related activities during school hours, such as physical education classes, which continue to be guided by Executive Order No. 175 and related guidance from the NJDOE and NJDOH Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools. This sports document, including the revised policy on outdoor masking, applies to extracurricular sports activities, even where they are performed on school property. Existing requirements and recommendations for masking in K-12 settings (i.e. classroom, gym class, activities during school hours) remain in effect. In short, our students may remove their masks when in gym or at recess as long as they are socially distanced, or when they are participating in aerobic or anaerobic activities.

I am confident that members of our community have beliefs and opinions about what is best for their children. At the link here, <https://www.nj.gov/governor/contact/all/>¹² you can contact the Governor's Office if you so choose. I have shared my concerns with our Executive County Superintendent's Office who communicates regularly with the Department of Education, as well as with the Governor and Congressman Malinowski. I do not share my letters publicly nor post them on social media, but members of our community can be confident that I continue to work diligently to fight for the safety of students and their need to move forward safely to make gains academically, socially, and emotionally.

COVID-19 Update:

Our Central West region continues to improve. Each week, the Department of Health provides information on the COVID-19 transmission at the regional level published through the CALI report. This week's COVID-19 report shows our Central West region remains in the "yellow." All indicators; Case Rate, Percent CLI, and Percent Positivity rates decreased with the Percent Positivity rate remains in the "low" activity level, identified as "green." The Southeast region of our state is in the "green." The Southeast region includes Atlantic, Cape May, and Cumberland counties. The state's COVID-19 Activity Level Index Weekly Reports are all linked [here](#). This week's activity level report is [here](#)

¹³.

⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

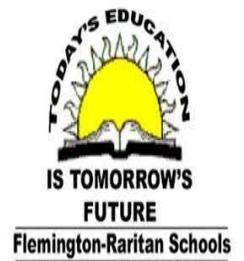
¹⁰ <https://www.frsd.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01001104/Centricity/Domain/15/Parent%20Letter-%205.14.2021.pdf>

¹¹ https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_GuidanceForSportsActivities.pdf

¹² <https://www.nj.gov/governor/contact/all/>

¹³ https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_19_Report_Week_2021_19.pdf

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The District received notice of two new positive COVID-19 cases of students who were last in their respective buildings on May 14. One student is at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School and one is at J.P. Case Middle School. A current count of reported COVID-19 cases is posted on the [District website](#). To find the current count of reported COVID-19 cases visit the district homepage and click on the headline that reads Current COVID-19 count. The chart is updated by the end of each day in which a case is reported to the Superintendent.

Pfizer COVID Vaccine Clinic

Hunterdon Healthcare will be hosting a Pfizer COVID Vaccine Clinic on Saturday, May 22, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Appointments can be scheduled for anyone that is 12 years of age or older. There will also be additional Pfizer clinics in the future, based on vaccine availability. Please note that a parent or guardian must accompany those under the age of 18. If you are interested in COVID vaccination for your child, there are two ways to get an appointment which are listed below.

States set their own rules when it comes to requiring students to be vaccinated against diseases. Forty-four states allow for exemptions for either religious or philosophical reasons or both. New Jersey is one of those states. According to the CDC, the federal government does not mandate vaccination for individuals¹⁴. At this time, the New Jersey Department of Education has *not* mandated the COVID-19 vaccination. [The New Jersey Department of Education provides a frequently asked questions document](#).¹⁵

Two ways to get an appointment

- Add your child's name to the Hunterdon COVID Vaccine Wait List. An email will then be sent to you with a link for electronic scheduling: hunterdoncovidvaccine.org
- Phone the Hunterdon COVID Vaccine Scheduling Call Center between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, at 908-237-4238.

My best to all our families for a wonderful weekend and enjoy the beautiful, blue skies and lovely weather. It is my great honor to continue to serve the district.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kari McGann
Superintendent of Schools

¹⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/essentialworker.html#work>

¹⁵ https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/Public_FAQ.pdf