

OPENING-OF-SCHOOL NOTIFICATIONS **2016/2017 School Year**

Genesis Parent Portal

The school district uses Genesis as its student information management system. All demographic and other information about our students is housed in Genesis. The district also utilizes Genesis to upload and report information about our students into the statewide student tracking system known as NJSMART. As the State of New Jersey requires the submittal of large amounts of student data, it is necessary for the school district to maintain accurate information in Genesis. Genesis contains a parent component called the "Parent Portal." All parents receive login information for the Parent Portal upon registering in the district. Please update your personal information in Genesis at your earliest convenience. Genesis will be used to keep your emergency contact information current, provide you access to your child's schedules and report cards, and so on. Should you have any questions, please contact Sally Moreno at (973) 457-2560.

School Messenger Notification System

Our method of contacting parents for school-related information or notifications will be through the *School Messenger* system. *School Messenger* is synchronized with Genesis on a nightly basis, so it is critical that your contact information in the Parent Portal be current.

Over the course of a school year, my office and the school(s) of your child(ren) will communicate information via *School Messenger*. All school closings will be communicated in this fashion, as well as announcements about school events, road closures, and other items. Please ensure that your contact information in the Genesis Parent Portal is **up to date**. To receive text messages via cell phone, please subscribe to School Messenger with your cell phone by following the instructions in the Parent Portal.

School Calendars and School Cancellation

The district calendar for the upcoming school year is available on the main page of our website and under the "Our District" section. In the event that we must call an unplanned early dismissal or delayed opening because of inclement weather or for some other reason, the procedures we will use to contact you and the school schedules for those days are outlined under the "School Cancellation" link, found under the "Parent Resources" tab.

Safety and Security

Schools must be places in which students feel secure and safe. Our schools all have a security plan that has been developed in concert with our local police departments. The plans are intentionally not shared with the public at large. Additionally, each school conducts ongoing safety drills, sometimes in collaboration with the police departments, to rehearse responses to different threats. If there were an emergency at a school and it became necessary for parents to pick up their children, we would **NOT** want you to come to the school where there was a problem. Unnecessary and excessive traffic at any school in the midst of an emergency will make it more difficult for police, fire and other emergency vehicles to access the site. Therefore, please note the evacuation site for each of our schools. In most instances, students will be relocated to these sites and parents will be asked to pick up their children there rather than at the school. If it is necessary to utilize a different location as an evacuation site based on extenuating circumstances, you will be notified via School Messenger.

Chatham High School – Good weather, Cougar Field; Bad weather, CMS
Chatham Middle School – Methodist Church
Lafayette Avenue School – Washington Avenue School
Southern Boulevard School – Corpus Christi Church

Washington Avenue School – Chatham Middle School
Milton Avenue School – Ogden Presbyterian Church

Each school building also has security cameras installed to help prevent vandalism or trespassing, and to capture suspicious activity. The cameras run 24 hours a day and record all video digitally. Although there is no intent to monitor routine activity or behavior through the camera system, I advise you that there is a video surveillance system in place at each school.

At the middle and high school, students also have access to a locker. Lockers are school district property and our administrators may inspect lockers as a result of a suspicion that there may be something illicit or dangerous in them or as a matter of routine security measures. Administrators may do so without prior notification to students or their parents.

At the high school level, our district also participates in a program through the Morris County Prosecutor's Office that provides canine sweeps for drugs. The high school administration and Prosecutor's Office will schedule at least two canine sweeps this year. During these sweeps, students in selected areas are accompanied to other areas of the building by their teachers while the canine unit inspects the classrooms they have vacated. At no time does any student have any contact—even visual contact—with the dog. The purpose of these sweeps is to deter the possession of illegal drugs by our students on school property.

Finally, each student in the district must adhere to our Acceptable Use Policy regarding school district technology. Please impress upon your child the importance of being respectful of school district property and of utilizing software in an appropriate manner.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

Schools must also be places in which students feel respected. Our district takes very seriously any activity or action that might undermine a secure, safe, and respectful environment. Our policy and regulation prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying may be found under the "Parent Resources" tab of the website. I advise you that the school district must comply fully with New Jersey's law and regulations on bullying and harassment, and also that students found to have committed an act of bullying and harassment may face serious disciplinary consequences. I encourage you to have direct conversations with your children about bullying and harassment. I also encourage you to speak with them specifically about language and actions that could be construed as homophobic, racist, ethnically biased, or otherwise biased.

Health Curriculum

Our school district adheres to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Those standards guide our Comprehensive Health and Physical Education curriculum and include subject matter pertaining to family life. Each school will send a letter outlining the topics covered in our Family Life curriculum during the course of the school year. You are welcome to review that information, and you have a right to opt your child out of a particular session that may be contrary to your family's personal values or religious beliefs. You do not have the right to opt your child out of the whole course, but there may be certain lessons for which you would rather your child receive an alternate assignment. It is your obligation to make this known to the school administration.

PARCC

New Jersey adopted the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers standardized testing program several years ago. Governor Christie has repeatedly stated his support for these tests and this past summer the state board of education made passage of PARCC a graduation

requirement for students graduating in 2021 or later. School districts are required to administer these tests. If a student refuses the test, she or he will be permitted to read in class.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

This is the federal law that requires the School District of the Chathams (with certain exceptions) to obtain your written consent prior to disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, the school district may disclose appropriate designated "directory information" without written consent unless you have advised the district to the contrary. The primary purpose of the directory information is to allow the school district to include this type of information from your child's educational records in certain school publications. Examples of these publications include: a school-wide directory so that parents may contact other parents in their child's homeroom, the annual yearbook, honor roll or other recognitions, graduation programs, a playbill indicating your student's role in an artistic production or performance, sports activity sheets with rosters, and for some sports like wrestling or football, showing weight and height of players.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without parents' prior written consent. The organizations with which the school district would share a directory are: the PTO, the Music and Theater Booster Club, the Athletic Booster Club, and the Chatham Education Foundation. In addition, the school district provides directory information with certain vendors identified by the school district as providing class rings, yearbooks, or student portraits to families. Two federal laws require local school districts to provide military recruiters upon request with three categories of information typically in school directories – names, addresses and telephone numbers. This is true unless parents have advised the school district that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

The method for "opting out" of inclusion in directory information will be to access the Genesis Parent Portal and click on the "opt out" box. If you wish to opt out, please do so as soon as possible, and no later than Friday, SEPTEMBER 16. **Please note that even if you have opted out in past years, you must do so again on an annual basis.** We have designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's Name
- Name of Parent(s)
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Grade level
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors and awards received
- Date and place of birth
- Date of attendance

I point out that opting out of directory information will preclude us from including your child's name or picture when a group is recognized for a particular performance or achievement. In the past, we were able to accommodate parental requests with a specific list of what is and what is not allowed to be published. We can no longer provide this individual accommodation. Almost all newspapers now have a website where they post the latest news and the most recent newspaper. This is just one example of why we can no longer accommodate "split" requests. We no longer have control of what happens once a

picture is in a publication. Therefore, you must choose whether or not to allow your child to be in all publications, news releases, etc. We are not able to individualize these permissions.

Acceptable Use Policy

The school district relies on a host of technology resources to deliver instruction to students. Students are required to abide by the rules and procedures governing the use of these resources as outlined in the district's acceptable use policy (Policy and Regulation 2361), as well as the additional rules established at the school level.

AHERA/Asbestos

Be aware that a number of years ago we had our schools inspected by an EPA-accredited building inspector. Since that time, we have had construction that included additions and retro-fitting at each of our schools and, as any of that asbestos was disrupted, it was removed from the building. It is also true that there continues to be some asbestos in our buildings, but it is important for you to know that the materials are in a form and condition that do not pose a health threat to students, faculty or employees. Additional information on this topic will be posted on our website, as appropriate.

Immunizations

The State of New Jersey requires students to receive a series of immunizations in order to attend public schools. Information about required immunizations may be found on the "Nursing and Student Health" section of our website.

Student Records

Parents have the right to review the contents of their child's records. To make an appointment to review the contents of your child's cumulative folder, please contact the school your child attends.

Student Dining Services

Your child's school will send information to you concerning the school lunch program. The district currently uses a service called "PayForIt.net" to allow parents to set up accounts and make electronic payments for school lunches. You will need your child's student ID to set up an account. Should you have any questions about dining services, please contact Bob McBreen, Food Service Supervisor, at (973) 457-2555 or email him at rmcbreen@chatham-nj.org

For Free and Reduced Lunch Applications, please go to our website and click on School Registration Forms. Scroll all the way down to the bottom of the list and click on the form to download and print out. After the application has been completed and signed by the parent/guardian, it should be returned to their youngest child's school. Anyone who does not have access to a computer/printer should contact their child's school for a paper copy.

Teacher Certification

As a result of the No Child Left Behind legislation and initiatives taken by the state of New Jersey to meet the requirements for providing students with highly qualified teachers, we are required to employ only teachers with specific, relevant certifications in their positions. On a rare occasion, there is something that happens subsequent to an individual's employment that may call that status into question, and I can assure you that our Human Resources Office pursues those issues diligently.

Integrated Pest Management System

School districts in New Jersey are obligated to provide information about their pest management to the public. Our policy related to this issue may be found on our website, under the "Our District" section. It is policy # 7422.

