

OPENING-OF-SCHOOL NOTIFICATIONS 2021/2022 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 includes 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 contact 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, district registrar, 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, the school district 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 school year](#) is available on the main page of our website. In the event that we must close school, the procedures we will use are outlined under the "[School Cancellation](#)" link, found under the "Parent Resources" tab.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of school district environments has certainly been at the forefront of all of our minds in recent years. Our school district has taken a number of measures to help ensure that our schools are safe and secure places of learning for our students. We work very closely with our local police departments to ensure that our security plans anticipate appropriate responses to threats. We have recently hired Class III officers to provide an extra layer of security in our schools, and have at least one in place in both Chatham Borough and Chatham Township. Our schools all conduct safety and evacuation drills on a monthly basis, sometimes in collaboration with the police departments, to rehearse responses to different threats. Finally, we continually evaluate our procedures in relation to school security so that we are taking into account the most recent guidance and recommendations from local, state, and federal agencies about how to keep students safe.

If there were an emergency at a school, the police have advised us that parents should NOT come to school to pick up their children, unless specifically directed to do so. 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. In the event an evacuation of a school is necessary, the evacuation site will be determined at the time of the emergency and communicated to parents at that time. Evacuation sites will change depending on the specific situation and conditions at the time, and may even be in a place outside of Chatham.

With over 4,000 students and staff members in our schools at any one time, it is not uncommon to have to deal with an emergent medical issue from time to time. In these instances, the school principal may call a shelter-in-place so that the student or staff member who needs treatment or transport to the hospital may have their privacy safeguarded. In these instances, the school district will NOT communicate confidential health or other information to the wider school community. Therefore, please recognize that if there is a police vehicle or ambulance at a school, it does not mean that there is a widespread threat to students; more often than not, it indicates an individual health-related issue.

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, there is a video surveillance system in place at each school that often assists in investigations of disciplinary issues.

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.

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 “District Overview” tab of the website. The school district must comply fully with New Jersey’s law and regulations on bullying and harassment. Accordingly, students found to have committed an act of bullying and harassment may face serious disciplinary consequences. Please have direct conversations with your children about bullying and harassment. Please also

 speak with them specifically about language and actions that could be construed as homophobic, racist, ethnically biased, or otherwise biased.

Substance Abuse and Possession of Illegal Substances or Paraphernalia

The school district also takes seriously the use of any substance considered illegal for minors to consume or possess. This includes alcohol, marijuana, electronic cigarettes, and devices used to “vape” tobacco, nicotine, or other substances. Our [policies regarding substance use and possession](#) may also be found on our website. Please be advised that a student’s consumption or possession of an illicit substance or paraphernalia used for the consumption of an illicit substance may result in an immediate drug screening and disciplinary action.

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, the high school sometimes employs the use of a Passive Breath Alcohol Sensor Device. This device is used to screen students randomly as they enter an event to detect and discourage the consumption of alcohol prior to and during events.

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.

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 may provide the directory include: the PTO, the Performing Arts Booster Club, the Athletic Booster Club, the district special education advisory group, and the Chatham Education Foundation. In addition, the school district provides directory information to 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 17. **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

Opting out of directory information will preclude the district 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 and 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

Our school buildings were constructed between 1925 and 1970. Asbestos was used in building materials during this time period, and there remain asbestos-containing materials in our schools. This material is in a form and condition that do not pose a health threat to students. However, we have been gradually removing the asbestos in each school building over the course of many years. When we do so, we work with EPA-certified contractors to ensure that there is no exposure to students or staff.

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 "[Student Health Services](#)" 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. All of our teachers possess the requisite credentials established by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Integrated Pest Management System

School districts in New Jersey are obligated to provide information about their pest management to the public. Our [plans and procedures](#) for each school building are also found on the “District Overview” tab of our website.

Water Testing

The school district conducts water testing to determine the presence of lead in any school building. The [results of the tests](#) are posted on our website, along with remediation actions and other information.