



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS

Office of the Superintendent

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Dear Parent,

This is just a quick update as we conclude our second week of school.

First and foremost, I want to thank everyone for their understanding and cooperation in getting us off to a solid start. Our students have once again been terrific about following the systems and rules we have in place to keep everyone as safe as possible, our staff has been enthusiastic and welcoming to our learners, and our parents have continued to display patience and sacrifice in helping their children adjust to school. I would like to send particular thanks to all the parents who really, really do not want to see their kids wearing masks, but who have supported the collective effort to adhere to state health protocols for the sake of keeping kids in school, all day, every day. It took a community effort last year to provide as much in-person instruction as we did, and the same is true this year. We have begun well because of the efforts of all. Thank you.

While our daily attendance has remained in the 97% - 98% range so far, we have experienced a number of COVID cases already. We will continue to utilize the [district dashboard](#) on our website to communicate cases by school location. We also will directly contact the parents of any student deemed to be a close contact of a positive case in the school setting. As expected, we are finding that we are dealing with fewer quarantines this year because of the high level of student vaccination in grades 7 - 12 and also because students who are masked and at least three feet apart from one another do not need to quarantine. Please continue to be forthcoming with our school nurses about any illness or exposure your child may have. One way to ensure that students remain in school, all day, every day is for parents to monitor their child's health, not send a sick child to school, and be communicative with the school nurse, who in turn can address any issues quickly to minimize impacts.

Tomorrow we will observe a moment of silence in all schools to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We will also engage students in age-appropriate discussions and activities about the events that day in most of our grade levels and in our social studies classrooms in the district. We will also hold a special ceremony involving local first responders at our home football game on Saturday.

Although the overall school day tomorrow will be “normal,” I just wanted to make you aware that there will be direct acknowledgement of 9/11 and that this could prompt some questions from some of our younger learners in particular.

One week later, on September 18, Cougar Field will be the host site for Morris County’s annual [Out of the Darkness Walk for Suicide Prevention](#), sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. We are proud to be a partner in this event and appreciate all those who make it happen.

Finally, you may recall that the New Jersey Department of Education suspended the administration of statewide standardized testing the past two springs. As part of that plan, the DOE is requiring school districts to administer a new test called the “[Start Strong](#)” Assessments by October 22. These assessments will be given to students in grades 4 - 12 in certain subjects. Our schools will provide additional information to you in the coming weeks about these tests and school schedules on testing day, just like they typically do with spring assessments. These tests are shorter in duration than the NJSLA tests we are accustomed to and we hope to satisfy this requirement with as little impact to instructional time as possible.

On September 11, 2001, I was in my first week as a Chatham High School teacher. During my Period 2 class, another teacher came to the door and passed me a note that simply stated that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. We had no email in the district at the time. I did not own a cell phone. There was no cable T.V. access in the school. There was no such thing as School Messenger or Genesis. The remainder of the day inside the school was a torrent of parents coming in to pick up their children, students hugging each other in the hallways, and teachers trying to maintain a sense of normalcy in the classrooms as the school day continued right through the final bell. Attached is a photo of the high school office that day--this is how the office was getting word to students about loved ones. We were back at school the next morning with the charge of providing students with a safe space and learning routine.

It is wonderful to have gotten the school year started. September weekends are some of my favorite of the year. I hope that you enjoy the beautiful weather coming our way, the start of fall sports seasons, and the accomplishment of having made it through the first couple of weeks of school. I also hope that you are able to process, reflect upon, and remember this anniversary in whatever way makes sense for you and your family.

Thank you again for helping set the foundation for a rewarding and productive year.

Sincerely,

Michael LaSusa