



## **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS**

### **Office of the Superintendent**

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January 1, 2022

Dear Parent,

Happy 2022! From a school district perspective, 2021 was much better than 2020, and I believe 2022 will prove better than 2021. We have a rough patch that we need to work through in the coming weeks, so I ask that you be patient as we make adjustments and do the best we can to keep our schools and students moving forward. Please note the following as we enter our first week of 2022:

- All schools will operate on a 2-hour delayed opening schedule for students this Monday, January 3. Morning sessions of kindergarten and pre-kindergarten are canceled. The reason for the delayed start for students is to allow our nursing staff some time to get a handle on the number of positive cases that await us, our principals to work on some additional adjustments (see below), and everyone a little bit of breathing room after an eventful week away from school buildings.
- We have had a number of staff members test positive for Covid over the holiday break and this will affect staffing and instruction this week. It is also possible that we will encounter disruptions to transportation and food services without much warning. Please be prepared for disruptions in these areas. We hope the delayed opening on Monday will also help in this regard for the first day of this week.
- We will continue to run a live stream via Google Meet from our classrooms this week. Students who are sick or whose parents do not feel comfortable sending them to school may access these Meets.
- At Chatham High School, we are temporarily expanding the privilege of Open Campus during lunch to all students, dependent on parent permission. The reason we are doing this is to enable younger students to go home to eat with their older siblings or be picked up at lunchtime by their parents if they would like so that we have fewer students in the school during lunch. Parents will be able to give their children permission to leave campus via the Genesis Parent Portal and the high school will send instructions for doing so to all parents in the coming days.
- In grades K-8, while students are not permitted to leave campus on their own, parents of course have the ability to sign their children out of school for periods of time. While this is usually done for doctor or other appointments, we understand that some parents may be interested in and able to do this during lunch on a temporary basis. Schools will communicate the process for this to

parents in the coming days. While we recognize that most parents might not be interested in or able to do this, if a small percentage of parents choose to do so then there will also be a little more space at lunchtime.

- We will continue to space students out during lunch and eat outside when feasible. The weather is expected to turn colder this week, however, so we will do the best we can.
- The CDC updated its guidelines for isolation and quarantining for the general public over the break. However, the New Jersey Department of Health and Department of Education have informed all school districts that these guidelines have NOT yet been incorporated into school-specific guidance. They have advised all districts to continue to follow the existing protocols regarding isolation and quarantine, which are the basis of our [Rules for Return](#).
- While the NJDOH has directed us to continue our existing isolation and quarantining protocols, it provided us yesterday with a [list of measures](#) it recommends now. We will be discussing these measures over the course of the next week to determine which of them to implement and how to do so.
- I will continue to communicate with our testing vendors in the coming week about expanding access to testing. I have also been in communication over the break with our Executive County Superintendent about piloting a test-to-stay model in order to reduce the number of students who must quarantine due to exposure. I will provide updates to you as I have them.

Our goal and expectation is to continue to provide full days of school for all students in the district as we deal with the current surge in Covid cases. The greatest help that parents can lend us in this regard is to keep any child who is sick home from school and be patient as we manage the unavoidable disruptions in staffing we will face. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and I look forward to warmer and brighter days in the near future.

Sincerely,

*Michael LaSusa*

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