



September 4, 2020

Dodgers,

Welcome to the 2020-21 school year!

By this time, you will have received correspondence from your principals and teachers with important details and warm greetings for a school year unlike any that has been experienced in 100 years. Safety, mental health and learner engagement are paramount as we open our doors next week. This message will provide you with several district-level updates of which you should be aware.

The [MPS Reopening Plan](#) has been approved by the NJDOE and the NJDOH.

Protocols, reopening models, services and safety measures can be seen in the link above. The plan also memorializes our intention to shift to full enrollment should safety compliance and public health data permit.

Classes will commence with in-person learning on September 8, but several ongoing challenges may necessitate temporary shifts to virtual learning.

Given the sensitive nature of operating public schools during a pandemic, safety must be of primary concern. We will therefore err on the side of caution by shifting one or more schools to remote instruction should a scenario occur in which our ability to ensure safety is compromised. Schools may be shifted to temporary remote instruction:

- If indoor temperatures rise to a point at which mask compliance is compromised
- If a central HVAC system failure compromises the air quality within our schools
- If anticipated staff absences rise to a level that compromises our ability to provide adequate supervision (We currently have 7% of faculty members impacted by a leave of absence or work from home accommodation; while this level is currently manageable, staffing levels are subject to change throughout the year based on individual circumstances).
- If public health conditions or Department of Health guidance necessitate a shift to remote.
- If any other condition emerges that compromises the safety and health of our staff or students.

Mask hygiene and hand hygiene will be critical to our success.

Masks must fit properly, be washed daily and handled carefully to ensure that germs do not spread. For more information regarding face coverings, see our updated [Mask Guidance](#) and the [CDC's How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask](#). For information about hand hygiene, see the [CDC's Frequent Questions About Hand Hygiene](#).

Regardless of what public health conditions lie ahead, the district has updated its instructional practices and master schedules to be able to provide high quality instruction to all students in any operational model.

Over the course of this summer, our faculty and school leaders reflected on our experiences with the emergency remote learning that occurred in the Spring. Leveraging feedback from meetings and



surveys, the district has developed new protocols and practices for Google Classroom that will enhance both in-person and remote learning. The [Blended Learning Commitments to Students and Parents](#) are being shared with you to demonstrate how our new practices will support all learners. Please read them carefully to understand the key improvements that are now in place.

Parents can support teachers by exercising patience as we implement new practices.

Even in one of the most logistically challenging environments, Madison educators are forging ahead with a progressive vision for education. This week, our faculty, staff and administration have been engaging in five full days of common planning, resource allocation, tech troubleshooting, class room configuration, and training sessions in the areas of blended learning, COVID19 awareness, safety procedures, mental health, and instructional technology (anti-racism training is also underway for this Fall). Nevertheless, we expect to experience some unforeseen challenges that must be worked through; technology will need refinement, schedules may need to be adjusted, and teachers will need time to optimize their new practices. You can support your child's teacher by communicating messages that are concise and encouraging. This will enable teachers to respond to you efficiently while maintaining focus on their students.

Over this weekend, be sure to carefully read all of the communications from your schools. This information will demonstrate how parents and educators can partner to employ innovative practices to overcome unprecedented challenges. Together, we will empower our students, support our community, and become stronger.

Sincerely,

Mark Schwarz