

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District  
 Dr. Kari McGann  
 Superintendent of Schools  
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March 19, 2021

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents and Community Members,

As of March 22, 2021, we are pleased that every school in our district is open, and every student that wants to attend school for in-person instruction for the remainder of the year is able to do so. We continue to provide remote learning options for parents or guardians who request it for their children. Several health and safety standards have been implemented for the school year to prioritize school reopening. Our schools have continuously implemented social distancing; required students, staff, and faculty to wear face coverings at all times while inside the school building and outside when social distancing cannot be maintained; established procedures in each school for the sanitation of the school building; and ensured each school in the district is cleaned and sanitized daily. Additionally, increased hand-washing measures are also in place for students, staff, and faculty.

Here's a look at our updated schedule:

March 22-26	Cohorts A & B combine for five days a week instruction on an early dismissal schedule.
March 29-April 1	Cohorts A & B combine for five days a week instruction on an early dismissal schedule.
April 2-9	Spring Recess
April 12-16	Cohorts A & B combine for five days a week instruction on an early dismissal schedule.
~Parents who selected all-virtual instruction for their child will continue with all-remote learning.~	

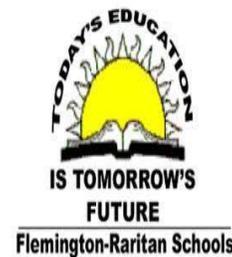
Keeping our school doors open for students is dependent upon health data and informed experts in the health field. Each week, the Department of Health provides information on the COVID-19 transmission at the regional level published through the CALI report. The reports are published weekly on Thursdays by the New Jersey Department of Health. [This week the COVID-19](#) report showed an uptick in the daily new COVID cases for every 100,000 people. The Central West region case rate (proportion of the population of daily new COVID-19 cases for every 100,000 people) went up from 22.49 to 25.69. The increase to over 25 changes our region from “yellow” to “orange.” The percent CLI (the presence of coronavirus diagnosis codes from emergency department data) remained the same. The percent positivity rate (percentage of total positive COVID-19 PCR tests out all tests performed) also decreased from 6.40 to 6.01 for this week.

According to the Hunterdon County Health Department, when our region is in the High COVID activity level, the 14 day quarantine time frame is recommended. Any deviation of the 14-day quarantine recommendation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis and only considered if the 14 days are not feasible due to extenuating hardship. The 14-day quarantine should be recommended for anyone exposed beginning yesterday. Karen DeMarco, Director of the Hunterdon County Health Department shared the following:

*As schools are seeking to increase the in-person learning model for more students, it is important to exclude ill and exposed individuals to prevent the spread of illness. The NJDOH guidance recommending face masks for all continues, and social distancing should continue to be encouraged as much as possible. Temporary remote learning and school closures may be recommended in settings with increasing cases of COVID, as outlined on page 18 of the k-12 guidance. Our office has investigated sporadic cases of likely in-school transmission, but the majority of cases within school settings result after exposure during sports, social gatherings, or from those in the household.*

In my [letter to parents on March 5, 2021](#), I shared the following information:

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You may be asking, “*What will we do if our region moves into the orange?*” We will not go back to a Cohort A and Cohort B alternating weekly hybrid schedule unless there are serious local issues in our community with community spread. If we return to an “orange” level and see an increase in cases and we remain in an “orange” status for several weeks, we may need to consider more serious alterations to adjust to the community spread, but bouncing back and forth between hybrid and a five-day in-person schedule does not allow for a consistent instructional program. There are adjustments we can make without having to fully disrupt our educational program. These may include but are not limited to the elimination of in-person to only virtual participation for sports at the middle school level or the possible discontinuation of lunch in our elementary buildings if either of these was deemed to be a factor in the increase in community spread. Other alterations may be necessary depending on the seriousness of the local case rate, percent CLI, and percent positivity rate.

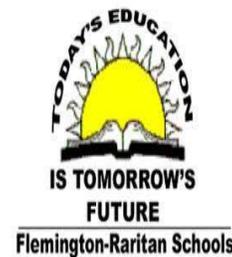
There are signs that we are moving in the right direction for New Jersey to open up wider with business establishments, athletic events, and indoor gatherings. Last week, on [March 11, 2021, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 230](#), which increased indoor capacity limits for certain businesses and further increased general limitations on indoor and outdoor gatherings. The order allows “restaurants, cafeterias, dining establishments, including private, non-profit clubs, and food courts, with or without a liquor license, bars, and all other holders of a liquor license with retail consumption privileges, collectively referred to as “food or beverage establishments,” that are open to the public shall limit the number of patrons in indoor areas to 50 percent of the food and beverage establishment’s indoor capacity, excluding the food or beverage establishment’s employees.” Even with this good news, we must remain vigilant. It is critical that we all continue to follow social distancing, masking, and other infection control protocols while vaccine administration is ongoing in the State. According to Governor Murphy, 1,156,827 New Jerseyans have been fully vaccinated. As of mid-morning today, 2,145,935 first doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer Vaccine were administered.

**Good news!** As of March 17, 2021, the New Jersey Department of Education and the State of New Jersey reported that the expectation is that every school in the State will be open, and every student and educator will be in their classrooms, for full-time in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 Academic Year. The Department of Education announced the [American Rescue plan funding](#) for all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia to support the recovery and the efforts to reopen K to 12 schools, setting forth 122 billion dollars for recovery. New Jersey is set to receive \$2,764,587,703. The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is waiting for final notification on the funding we will receive.

### **Support for Students’ Mental Health**

As more students return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic, the District is mindful of the possibility of students having increased stress and anxiety. Next week some students are returning to school for the very first time since last March. Other students have been in school in the hybrid setting but may see friends next week they haven’t seen in person in a very long time. Other changes include more students in our buildings, some schedules that are different, and students attending school in-person more often. Your child may even have morning and afternoon routines at home that are different from what they are accustomed to. All of this change can create increased stress and anxiety for some students.

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The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District's partnership with Effective Schools Solutions supports our district to implement mental and behavioral support programs for students. Effective Schools Solutions has created two videos to support families as tools to help students manage and cope with the anxiety around a new learning environment. The videos provide tips to help students manage feelings they may be having, adjust to changes in routines, and even manage social anxiety some students face by having to be on camera. I highly encourage families to find time to watch the student video together published for the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District from Effective Solutions:

- [A Student Video -- Back to School: Take Care of You and Coping with Stress](#)
- [A Parent Video "What Parents Can Do: Supporting Your Child's Return to School During Stressful Times."](#)

#### **More Good News from a CDC Update:**

Today the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised its guidance on social distancing in schools, saying most students can now sit 3 feet apart instead of 6 feet so long as they are wearing masks. [You can find the link here.](#) The recommendation is for all K-12 students, regardless of whether community transmission is low, moderate, or substantial, the CDC said. The recommendation from the CDC follows a study [published by Oxford University Press for the Infectious Diseases Society of America 2021.](#)

#### **COVID-19 Update**

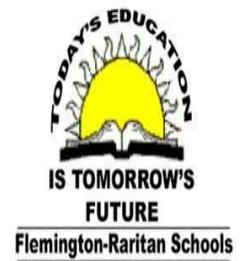
The District received notice of four positive COVID-19 cases. Two are J.P. Case Middle School students; one was last in the building on March 5 and the other on March 17. One positive case is a Reading-Fleming Intermediate School staff member who was last in the building on March 17. One positive case is a Francis A. Desmares School student who was last in the building on March 5. Our District nurses follow all contact tracing guidelines from the Department of Health.

#### **Required Travel Quarantine- Travel Plans Are Discouraged**

The milder weather is a happy reminder that spring break is just a few weeks away. At this time, the NJ Department of Health guidance is that non-essential, out-of-state travel is discouraged, regardless of a person's vaccination status. Travelers must continue to follow quarantining recommendations after travel. Unless there is a change in this guidance, all students who travel to any U.S. state or territory beyond the immediate region (New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) must quarantine. Speak with one of our school nurses for questions on the number of days your child must quarantine if your child travels. Also, please contact your child's school principal if your child has been required to quarantine due to exposure or travel out of New Jersey. Students that must quarantine due to exposure or travel will utilize simulcasting/live streaming support during their quarantine.

As per Board of Education Policy 5210, the Board of Education requires that pupils enrolled in the schools of this district attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State. Pupil participation in all daily scheduled classroom activities is essential in order to achieve continuity of instruction and learning experiences. To this end, attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the schools during the days and hours that the school is in session. Although the Board recognizes the benefits to students of time spent with families, the Board encourages families to take trips and/or to travel when school is not in session.

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### **Substitutes Needed**

Now more than ever, our district is in need of substitute teachers as we work to open doors wider for students while continuing to provide all-remote instruction to families that choose a virtual learning model. If you are interested in substituting in the District, [please click here for more information](#).

### **Vaccines for Staff**

This week, Hunterdon County school districts have partnered with the Hunterdon Medical Center to distribute vaccines to employees working in a school district in Hunterdon County. Each week, the HMC will allot a number of vaccine doses to individuals who work in schools within Hunterdon County. Our staff and faculty are encouraged to register for the vaccine and will be randomly selected each week based on the availability of vaccine doses. We are grateful to Hunterdon Medical Center for its effort to vaccinate Hunterdon County school employees.

My best to all our families for a wonderful weekend.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kari McGann  
Superintendent of Schools