

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District
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March 26, 2021

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

We are at an exciting time for our students, staff, faculty, and families! Our schools are open for Cohort A and Cohort B students to attend together. We successfully combined cohorts bringing back students for in-person learning in all our buildings. This past Monday at each school in our district there was an excitement similar to the first day of school in September. School mascots welcomed students with waves and cheers. There were welcome signs outside buildings and big smiles from behind masks. Some students were welcomed back into the building for the very first time since last March. Students that have been attending school in a cohort model were able to see friends in person that they had only seen on Zoom since the beginning of the school year. It was quite a celebration this week! Yes, there were challenges-- student drop off and pick up was crowded with traffic, some students were a bit worried about the different look in our classrooms and hallways with more students present, and it got a bit warm near the end of the week in some of our classrooms due to the spring weather. All in all, though, we had a successful week despite the challenges.

As a result of the combined cohorts, there are more students in all our buildings. All our elementary schools have close to 300 students present in the building each day. The intermediate school and middle school have close to 500 students present each day. The total number of students enrolled in the district is just over 3,000 which means 73 percent of our students are back for in-person instruction. We will continue to provide in-person instruction every day on an early dismissal schedule. Parents who selected all-virtual instruction for their child will continue with all remote learning.

Here's a look at our updated schedule:

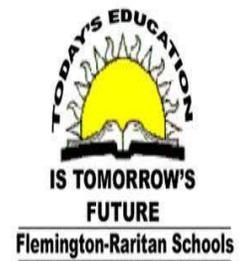
March 29-April 1	In-person students attend school every day on an early dismissal schedule.
April 2-9	Spring Recess
April 12-16	In-person students attend school every day on an early dismissal schedule.
April 19-23	In-person students attend school every day on an early dismissal schedule.
April 26-30	In-person students attend school every day on an early dismissal schedule.
<i>~Parents who selected all-virtual instruction for their child will continue with all-remote learning.~</i>	

We continue to move forward with planning for the remainder of the school year and the 2021-2022 school year. Our plans are for a traditional school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year with full in-person learning for all students in a traditional schedule. At this time, a full-day schedule is being planned for September 2021.

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 COVID-19 report continues to show our Central West region in the "orange."](#) Unfortunately, our region saw an increase in the percent positivity rate. The percent positivity rate is the percentage of total positive COVID-19 PCR tests out of all the COVID-19 PCR tests performed. The percent positivity is monitored as a 7-day average.

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

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case-by-case basis and only considered if the 14 days are not feasible due to extenuating hardship. Until we see a different trend in the number of cases, a decrease in the COVID-19 activity level index reports, we will take the safest route to keep our doors open to students, staff, and faculty, and exclude those who are exposed. [The CDC and the NJDOH continue to endorse 14 days as the preferred quarantine period](#)—and thus the preferred school exclusion period. I know this is a burden on families and students. Every day I speak with parents in phone calls and email about how hard the pandemic is on them as parents, on their children, and their entire family. I continue to look forward to the day when all students are back in the building full time when masks are not needed and students no longer have to use Zoom for their learning platform.

COVID-19 Update

The District received notice of a positive COVID-19 case of a faculty member who was last on campus on March 25, a staff member at Reading-Fleming Intermediate School who was last in the building on March 19, a J.P. Case Middle School student who was last in the building on March 24, and two Francis A. Desmares students; one was last in the building on March 23 and the other on March 25. Our District nurses follow all contact tracing guidelines from the Department of Health.

Unfortunately, our region has seen an increase in the total positive COVID-19 tests, which is represented in the letters I send to families almost daily. We do not want to see an increase to the levels that we saw after Thanksgiving and winter break. During that time the District struggled to keep our doors open for students due to the number of staff, faculty, and students that needed to quarantine. We are approaching that same level. 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.

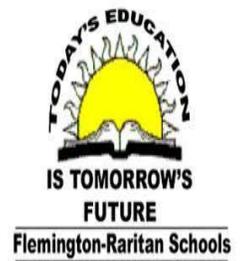
Vaccines for Staff and Faculty

Using our partnership with the Hunterdon County Health Department, we are helping staff, faculty, and our substitute teachers get vaccinated as quickly as possible. Hunterdon County Department of Health reports that roughly 400 Hunterdon County school faculty and staff members had appointments to get their vaccination. This week, more of the faculty and staff from Flemington-Raritan Regional School District received their vaccinations. Flemington-Raritan had over 100 staff/faculty members that received notification for an appointment from our district last week. This week there are even more! Vaccines aren't the only solution, however. Keeping our school doors open for students is dependent upon continued attention to health and safety guidelines. Even with the increase in access to vaccinations, 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.

Required Travel Quarantine- Travel Plans Are Discouraged

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.

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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.

Substitutes Needed

Now more than ever, our district needs 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](#).

My best to all our families for a wonderful weekend. I hope everyone can enjoy some of the sunny weather forecasted for Saturday.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kari McGann
Superintendent of Schools