

HARRINGTON PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

July 17, 2020

Good Evening Harrington Park,

As a family, we have always been committed to the health and safety of all our students and staff. In March, when we transitioned to remote learning, we knew that closing school was essential to flattening the curve of COVID-19 infections across Northern New Jersey. It was profoundly challenging, but as a school community, we rose to the challenge with grace and perseverance.

Recently the State Department of Education presented a plan to reopen schools. While the document was to serve as a road map, the information has been limited in its guidance and, at times, contradictory. As always, I felt it essential to brief you on the crucial elements to a successful opening to school in the fall of 2020-2021.

Now, almost five months later, our commitment to health and safety will drive us into the new school year. We have been through so much together, and as we look ahead to September, we see the next challenge: the continuing rise in cases across the country; current guidance from City, State, and Federal health authorities to develop sound practices that will keep our students and staff safe. We have also received over 300 responses from families about their preferences and concerns for the upcoming year, which has been critical in our planning.

The current situation demands we begin the 2020-21 school year in an unprecedented way—including new health protocols throughout the facility that protects not just our students and staff but the community at large. In the next few weeks, we will be presenting our plan of action for the start of the school year.

We are in the process of formalizing our plan to meet our expectations as a community. As the state plan is not due until 7/27/20, I felt it necessary to share with you some of the critical elements that will be part of our strategy.

We anticipate that the district plan will include the following:

- 1. A two-step screening process for students and faculty before and upon the arrival to school.*
- 2. A modified educational program during Phase I. The district has created multiple plans based on what the final state mandates require.*
- 3. Extensive cleaning of the facility.*
- 4. Small class sizes to ensure social distancing protocols. To do this, we are looking at spaces throughout the building for students to utilize. Additionally, students will remain in cohort groups for academic and social-emotional*

instruction. Staff will move throughout the building to work with student cohorts to minimize student travel.

5. Health and wellness programs to ensure that our students transition back into HP, both academically and emotionally.
6. The mandatory use of face masks or gaiters by students, staff, and visitors.

We believe that these elements will be critical to our success as a district during this pandemic.

As a district, we have always held the belief that service above oneself is the greatest gift we can give to each other. These procedures are in place not only for us to observe but to model to our children that even these small deeds, even though small in nature, will ensure the health and safety of others. These will be the lessons that go beyond the academics in the classroom. As we move through the school year, our plans must also be nimble so we can adjust and update as needed, and we will continue to evaluate our procedures based on the current State guidance and evolving health conditions within the State. I look forward as always to see the great things we will accomplish together.

While it is uncertain to know precisely how the school will look throughout the 2020-21 year, students in our traditional program will likely experience times where they will be in-person and virtual learning due to changing conditions related to COVID. We will be required to follow the recommendations of our health professionals to see us through these changes, and I have the utmost confidence in them as we move forward.

As a district, we recognize that these times also build a feeling of anxiety and uncertainty, and we are working tirelessly to create an educational program that honors the core vision of HP. We know that our families want as much in-person instruction as is safely possible, and we will work to maximize it at every turn, consistent with health and safety requirements.

We also understand that this uncertainty may lead families to request an all-remote learning platform for their child(ren). As per current State level procedures, this request can only be granted if a doctor diagnoses a condition that would require a home instruction program. The district has started to develop a virtual plan that will be taught by certified substitute staff and will deliver our HP curriculum in our core subject areas. For families that select to utilize this option, it will be essential for scheduling purposes that your child(ren) will be placed in the HP Virtual School for the duration of the trimester. Before the change in the trimester, a follow-up letter will be sent home and allow you to change the attendance status of your child(ren).

A second option for families is based on state regulation NJ 18A:38-25 in which a parent may choose to disenroll their child(ren) and homeschool them for a period of time based on family needs. While this is an option for some families, the district strongly recommends that they continue to be enrolled in the district so they may benefit from a well-planned educational and wellness program.

Please find a link to a **Digital Form** for you to use here if your family makes either of these decisions. As this decision impacts the overall district program, I am asking that

you please complete the online form as well as any and all medical documentation by August 1st.

In closing, as a husband of an educator and as a dad, I am just as anxious as all of us concerning the fears we have all expressed about the start of the school year. I have and will continue to promise you that it will always be my charge that I will do everything I can to ensure the health and safety of our children and family members. It is my deep belief in the administrative team and professional staff in the creation of an environment that ensures this promise. Together we can ensure that our students—our children—in the Harrington Park School System receive the education they deserve in the safest, most supportive environment possible.

All the best,

Dr. Adam D. Fried