



LITTLE SILVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. Michael E. Ettore
Superintendent of Schools
124 Willow Drive, Little Silver, NJ 07739

Tel: 732-741-2188
Fax: 732-741-3644

September 23, 2020

Dear Little Silver Families,

As the summer drew to a close and we headed into September, I firmly believed that using the hybrid schedule was a cautious and responsible way to start the school year. Since the first day of school, the administration has been monitoring the progress in both schools and making adjustments along the way. Based on the observations made by the staff in both schools and the ongoing feedback I have received from teachers, administration and parents, it is clear that the landscape for learning looks different at Markham Place than it does at Point Road. This is true simply because the students at MPS are older and much more ready and able to navigate the waters of our hybrid schedule and virtual learning. This is even more true because the MPS students need very little, if any, parental support during their virtual learning sessions.

Knowing that our youngest students are struggling with the various aspects of remote learning, I decided to create a proposal that would enable the district to gradually move into the next phase of our Reopening Plan. Having vetted the plan with the administrative team, the teachers and the Board of Education, I am ready to share the details with our families. However, it is important for everyone to know that the intention is to move the district forward in a gradual and responsible manner. In order to maintain the safest possible classroom environment, the move to phase 3 needed to wait until the district receives the remainder of the plexiglass desk barriers for each individual student. Having learned that those items are scheduled to arrive early next week, my plan is to move Kindergarten and first grade into phase 3 of our reopening Plan as of Tuesday, October 5.

This means that all students in both of those two grades would be able to attend school on Tuesday through Friday. Monday will continue to be a fully virtual day for everyone in order to give the custodians the opportunity to conduct a thorough top-to-bottom cleaning in both schools to start each week. This day also helps the teachers improve and refine their remote teaching practices in case we are forced to pivot back to phase 1 at any given time where all staff and students would be fully remote on a daily basis. Additionally, in phase 3, the Kindergarten and first grade classes would still be on a half-day schedule, like all of the other grade levels.

The decision was made to start with these two grade levels simply because these are the groups that are struggling the most to receive the level of learning that is needed to build their educational foundations, especially in literacy and math. In order to prepare for this plan, the classrooms will be rearranged as needed with additional tables and chairs to create the greatest degree of social distancing in each room. Furthermore, each student will have an individual desk barrier along with their masks to help prevent the spread of germs in the room. Knowing the importance of maintaining a safe distance between students as much as possible, adjustments will be made to the amount of movement around the room and even to certain instructional practices. For example, the teachers will still utilize their area rugs and small tables for large and small group instruction, but those activities will need to be conducted in a modified manner to help prevent the spreading of germs in the room.



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I realize that taking this step will prompt many parents to ask about when the same will happen with the other grade levels. As I stated earlier in this letter, my intention is to take a cautious and gradual approach. Once the K&1 students transition into phase 3 as of October 5, we will closely monitor their progress. If all goes well, then the Board of Education and I will target a date during the month of October when we will be ready to expand our reopening steps to include the remainder of Point Road School. Once we reach that point, the Board of Education and I will target dates for taking the same gradual approach at Markham Place.

As always, I remain focused on taking a course of action that will enable the district to meet the needs of our students. My goal is to balance the need to be proactive and progressive with the need to be mindful of the issues and concerns that surround the health and safety of our staff and students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael E. Ettore".

Superintendent