

March 16, 2021

Dear Falcon Families:

As you know, the district has been exploring ways to increase instructional time for our students. There are many factors to consider when looking at each of the options: the physical size of the classroom, available space for student desks, social distancing requirements, class sizes, and the number of students who attend in-person. While we all want our students to return to a normal schedule (full-day, every day), we must remember that there are guidelines that the school district must follow which were set forth by the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) in response to the pandemic. Any changes to our hybrid learning plan must be done safely and responsibly.

After much careful consideration, the district is able to adjust our current hybrid learning plan while keeping the above factors in mind **starting on April 12, 2021**. These plans have been made in consultation with the local health department. The principals will be sending out additional information regarding their individual buildings in the upcoming weeks.

The PK-5 hybrid plan will be altered as follows:

- Cohorts will be eliminated (all in-person learners physically attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday);
- Social distancing will be reduced to three feet with the use of dividers at each student's desk which is in line with the NJDOE's Road Back;
- Virtual Wednesdays will remain the same to provide time for a deep clean of the buildings; and
- Students will follow an early dismissal schedule similar to the one used for parent-teacher conferences to give additional time for the buses to pick up the Middle and High School students. An early dismissal schedule was chosen due to the difficulty of providing lunch and specials to our elementary students.

The district needs your help to make this happen! If you are able, we are asking that you please drive your child(ren) to and from school. This will help reduce the number of students on a bus and reduce the likelihood of your child becoming a close contact. We are also asking parents to finalize their choice of in-person or virtual instruction for the remainder of the school year. Additional information regarding this choice will be provided by the building principals.

The hybrid plan for grades 6-12 will be altered as follows:

- Students will remain in cohorts and attend in-person instruction on the day of their cohorts (Jefferson and Falcons);
- Social distancing will be maintained with six feet between students during classes;
- Virtual Wednesdays will remain the same to provide time for a deep clean of the buildings;
- Students will attend in-person or remotely for a full-day according to the cohort schedule; and
- If social distancing is not feasible during lunch periods, students will be seated at least three feet apart with the use of a divider.

The number of students attending in-person at the Middle and High Schools combined with the size of the classrooms and the number of students in our classes does not give us enough room for three-feet of social distancing as required by the NJDOE; we are not permitted to reduce social distancing below three feet, even with barriers. Currently, there are classrooms that are full to capacity with cohorts in place.

While I recognize that this change in our hybrid learning plan may be a disappointment for some, I am hopeful for a normal reopening of our buildings as we begin to plan for September.

Be well,

***Jeanne Howe***

Jeanne Howe, Superintendent of Schools