



Orange Township Public Schools

Gerald Fitzhugh, II, Ed.D.
Office of the Superintendent



August 24, 2020

Dear Orange Township Public School District Staff Members,

The beginning of a new school year, like the dawning of a new day, reminds us that the future holds infinite possibilities. I hope that your summer vacation continues to be relaxing; filled with adventures and good health because you deserve it. The opportunity to refuel over the summer is a necessary component of the important work that we do. This summer, more than ever, I am certain that you needed time to decompress. Though we are still immersed in our “new normal,” as a district we were able to reflect on our practices. Through our summer programming and into the launch of the Reopening of Schools, I feel we have a cohesive plan that will benefit all stakeholders because your voices were echoed throughout the plan.

We are about to begin a great school year filled with hope, vision, and excitement. As we begin this school year in a virtual manner, I wish everyone the greatest success as we welcome over 5,500 students on their educational journey. As you know, this school year will begin quite differently. Through remote means we will continue to embrace the students as if they were in front of us in our respective buildings.

On August 10, 2020, Dr. Powell and I presented the Return to School Plan in a virtual Town Hall meeting that was livestreamed on the district’s Facebook and YouTube Channels. During the meeting, we presented two plans, Plan A and Plan B. However, Plan B was the plan recommended to the Board of Education. In Plan B, teachers will conduct instruction in modified virtual learning formats for a percentage of the school year. Below is the outline for Plan B as explained at the virtual Curriculum Committee meeting of the Board of Education on July 28th as well as the virtual Town Hall meeting that took place on August 10th and finally at the virtual Board of Education meeting on August 11th.

September 8 – October 2 (4 weeks)

In Phase 1: 100% Virtual Learning all teaching/learning is done virtually/remotely from home and in a scheduled and synchronous format. During this time, the district is establishing best practices in virtual education. This time allows the following to occur:

- ✓ Schools are intensifying trainings to staff, parents, and students focused on approved digital platforms
- ✓ Teachers are revisiting the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge for each subject area and grade level with students
- ✓ Teachers are evaluating students’ unfinished learning such to provide acceleration support
- ✓ Schools are integrating trauma informed/SEL programming into traditional instructional programs
- ✓ Schools are disseminating the essential instructional resources that teachers must have at home/school based upon grade level
- ✓ Schools are disseminating the “print” materials that students need for at home and on-site instruction
- ✓ Schools are disseminating individualized materials for student use (manipulatives, art supplies, science/STEM lab materials, goggles), ordering more supplies than normal
- ✓ Schools are developing remote synchronous schedules, identifying classroom spaces
- ✓ District is installing all safety materials

October 5 – November 25 (7 weeks)

In Phase 2: Remote Synchronous teachers report onsite for 2 days per week providing virtual synchronous instruction within their designated classroom spaces; support staff (*guidance, CST, related service providers, social workers, attendance officers*), nurses, TC’s, secretaries are onsite 4 days per week. Shared teachers may have an AM/PM schedule. Webcams are used during instruction for at home learners. Webcams will be trained only on teachers during use. Teachers are onsite for the length of the school day.* *If schedule and staffing allows; more time can be scheduled for at risk/Tier III students.* Staff will also follow schedules for CPT’s and other planning times. Administrators are able to begin conducting formal observations of instruction

during this time. Student schedules during this time will follow a half day instructional format with dedicated afternoons for office hours. Note: Paraprofessionals must align their schedules to the teachers they accompany and support.

November 30 – December 23 (3.5 weeks)

In **Phase 3: Soft Launch** a small percentage of pre-identified students (SWD's, ELLs, Tier III, etc.) are able to return onsite for live, face to face instruction; *Pre-identified students report to school following the days and times described on page 36 in the Reopening Plan.*

January 4, 2021 – end of year

In **Phase 4A, 4B, 4C: Full Reentry**, all students report to school following the days and times scheduled. These schedules will be staggered to ensure the ongoing health and safety of all staff and students.

In terms of technology supports as well as instructional materials, I will update families in the coming days in order to ensure that you have the appropriate and timely information needed for planning. We will have kiosks during the school year in the effort of troubleshooting technology concerns as well as providing additional devices should the need arise.

Throughout the course of our work this year, the reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us email will remain intact in order to answer questions that you may have during this unique experience. As always, please allow up to 24 hours for a return email although responses are often provided within hours of sending. Keeping both staff and families abreast is very important and all the more in these times.

Grab-and-Go Breakfast & Lunch Program

The District will continue to provide packaged 'Grab-and-Go' breakfast and lunch during all virtual/remote phases at no cost to families, and at multiple locations for pick up. The selected locations are:

- OECC (includes students from Cleveland Street School), located 397 Park Avenue
- Scholars Academy, located at 268 Capuchin Way
- Forest Street School, located 651 Forest Street
- Heywood Avenue School, located at 421 Heywood Avenue
- Lincoln Avenue School, 216 Lincoln Avenue
- Oakwood Avenue School, located at 135 Oakwood Avenue
- Park Avenue School, located at 231 Park Avenue
- Rosa Parks Community School, located at 369 Main Street

Please be advised that all locations will host the breakfast/lunch grab and go program from 7:30 AM until 1:30 PM, Monday through Friday. Students may pick up their meal **from any** of the locations listed above. **Social distancing as well as the wearing of a mask is required when reporting to all locations. It is important to note, once students receive their breakfast/lunch grab and go bags it is the expectation to return to their respective homes.**

We will continue to work as a team to ensure that professional development is tailored to the needs of staff and established by data. As shared this summer, curriculum and instruction continues to improve in our district as well as our fiscal, operations, personnel, and governance components. As indicated by Paula Bloom, Acting Director of Field Services on the behalf of the New Jersey Department of Education in a communication the district received regarding our August 2020 New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) status,

“I am pleased to inform you that your district has satisfied at least 80% of the weighted indicators in each of the five areas of the NJQSAC review process [curriculum and instruction, finance, operations, personnel, governance] and has been designated as “high performing.” The Commissioner will recommend to the State Board of Education that your district be certified as providing a thorough and efficient system of education, for a period of three years or until the next NJQSAC review. Congratulations on this accomplishment. This certainly took teamwork and it is important that we recognize our accomplishments.”

This school year, Central School will reopen as a standalone school (Grades K-2) with Ms. Denise White as principal. We are opening a new Early Childhood Center at 123 Cleveland with Dr. Cayce Cummins as principal. STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges is now a standalone high school in Orange Township. The school will house grades 9-12. Mr. Salvatore Lima will lead STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges as the new principal.

I look forward to seeing each of you virtually on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. Please note, due to the Superintendent's Forum being virtual, a schedule will be sent this week of your school's assigned time. This forum will provide a look into the highlights from SY 2019-2020 and what we will do to continue moving in an upward mobility. As always, there is no 'I' in TEAM. This is our district and 'WE' are doing great work to transform our practices and positively impact the students that we service on a daily basis. As we move forward with our reform efforts, I invite you to think about something written so long ago, but that still resonates today. Author John Katzenbach reminds us that "teamwork represents a set of values that encourage behaviors such as listening and constructively responding to points of view expressed by others, giving others the benefit of the doubt, providing support to those who need it, and recognizing the interests and achievements of others."

I am confident that we will continue to blaze a trail filled with success and accomplishment as, together, we launch the best year yet for the Orange Township Public School District!

Educationally yours,

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