

SOUTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear South Brunswick Community,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying your summer and time with family and friends. As we continue in the month of August, I am reminded that our first day of school for the 2021-2022 school year is fast approaching! I could not be more excited for its return!! I want to take this opportunity to provide everyone with an update on our planning for the 2021-2022 school year. While I will be sharing the current state of affairs, I am sure you are all aware that things can change depending on directives from the Governor, Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Health (DOH). In fact, just since Friday, we have received two major pieces of guidance that force the district to alter its approach to school operations. **This letter will outline where things stand as of the writing of this letter and I ask that you understand there may be changes based upon further guidance that may be forthcoming from the State at any time.**

It is important for everyone to realize that 100% of our students in our schools for full days with lunch has a direct impact on our ability to institute certain measures as we did last year. In order to be transparent and provide information on what to expect, please read through this detailed letter.

IMPORTANT: Everything we are planning for September is based on all students and staff returning to full days of school, Monday through Friday, with lunch served. This is the current directive of the Governor, and nothing in this regard has changed as of today.

THIS LETTER WILL BE LENGTHY, BUT INFORMATIVE ON THE "NEED TO KNOW" ITEMS FOR THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR. PLEASE READ THROUGH THE ENTIRE LETTER.

Covid Related Health & Safety Information via Commonly Asked Questions

Virtual/Remote Learning

As per the [The Road Forward](#), a collaboration from the Governor, Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Health (DOH), school districts are **not able to offer virtual learning** as a student's full instructional program. The opening of *Road Forward* reads, "Local Education Agencies (LEA) **must plan** to provide full-day, full-time, **in-person instruction and operations** for the 2021-2022 school year."

- Q: Can my child do their learning from home similar to last year where they would join the class through Zoom?

- **No, The school day will be in-person only.**
- Q: What are the options for my child if I am not comfortable sending them to in-person learning at the school?
 - **Unfortunately, the only option is to disenroll your child(ren) and either enroll them in a private school setting or homeschooling program.**
- Q: What if my child has a severe medical condition that puts them at severe risk if they were to contract Covid-19?
 - **Even prior to the pandemic, there have been situations where a student requires a totally different learning environment. There is a process for this that includes documentation from medical professionals. If you believe your child falls into this category, please reach out directly to your child's principal or if applicable, case manager.**

Masks

Masks will be required to be worn by all students and staff (some exclusions outlined below) including all visitors to our buildings as per the [Governor's Executive Order 251](#) that states that students and staff in K-12 schools will be required to wear masks at the start of the school year. - This includes being fully masked on school buses at all times. All school codes of conduct will be updated with this state mandate. We will of course monitor any change to this mandate.

- Q: Will the school district provide my child with a mask?
 - **No, each family is responsible for providing their child with a mask that fits and can be worn for the full day over the child's nose and mouth. However, if a child does need a mask due to forgetting or the like, the school will have masks available.**
- Q: Will there be an opportunity for mask breaks during the school day?
 - **Yes, schools will be sharing specifics about this with families and students.**
- Q: Will masks be required outdoors for things such as recess?
 - **At this time, outdoor mask wearing is not mandatory. However, we will be watching closely and making a final decision on this closer to the beginning of the school year.**
- Q: What if a student does not wear their mask?
 - **There are multiple ways to look at this.**
 1. A student that willfully chooses to not wear their mask will be subject to the school's code of conduct and will face similar consequences to other school infractions. [Please click here](#) to read the language in the code of conduct regarding mask wearing.
 2. We fully understand that some students may legitimately struggle with wearing a mask. In these instances, we will work with the student and possibly the family to help them acclimate to the full day of wearing a mask correctly.
- Q: Does my child need to wear a mask on the bus?
 - **Yes, all students must have a mask on before boarding a school bus.** Please ensure that your child is masked when they leave the home and prepared to board the bus fully masked each morning.
- Q: How will lunch be handled with the mask mandate in effect?
 - **Please see the below "Lunch" section for all lunch related information and questions**

Exclusions to this MASK mandate are as follows: Please note that for any exclusion to be considered there will be a process in place. Please reach out to your child's case manager (when applicable) or school principal for more direction.

- When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
- When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance;
- When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face covering;
- When the individual is under two (2) years of age;
- When an individual is engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating and drinking or playing an instrument that would be obstructed by the face covering;
- When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anerobic activity;
- When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

Lunch

Lunch is one of our biggest challenges as for obvious reasons, students will be unmasked when eating. Each school is working out the details of how to best approach lunch. You will hear more details and specifics from your child's school.

- **Q:** Is lunch still free this year for all students?
 - **Lunch will be free for all students in the 2021-2022 school year.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved funding to offer all students breakfast and lunch at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year regardless of eligibility status. Qualifying for free or reduced-price meals may provide your family with additional benefits such as P-EBT funding, reduced rates for sports, free college applications, etc. so please be sure to fill out a free and reduced application when applicable. Applications will open on September 1st. [Please click here to view a letter from Chartwells Dining Service with more information on our lunch program.](#)
 - **This does not mean that you cannot send your child in with a lunch**, it just means that a free lunch is available for all students nationwide regardless of income, need or any other defining characteristic.
- **Q:** Will there be social distancing in the lunchroom?
 - **As students will be in the lunchrooms obviously eating without masks, we are going to social distance in lunchrooms whenever possible.** Each school has been redoing schedules and redesigning their lunch facilities and locations as needed to accommodate social distancing. I want to be honest in saying that 100% capacity spaces do not readily lend themselves to social distancing. Modifications are being

made, but this is an area of concern for the schools as we manage the Governor's directive of full capacity schools for full days.

- **Q:** What food from Chartwells Food Service will be provided this year?
 - **We have recently sent out a communication from Chartwells Food Service which outlines the plan for lunches this year.** If you normally purchase lunch or plan to have your child eat lunch provided by the school, make sure to read this [communication](#).

Vaccinations

As of the writing of this letter, there is **no mandate** that students or staff **MUST** be vaccinated to be allowed to come to school. Currently vaccines are available and easy to obtain for individuals 12 years of age and older. There is still no current availability or approval for children under 12.

- **Q:** Is my 12 year old or older child required to be vaccinated to be allowed to come to school?
 - **No, there is no mandate at this time. If this changes, we will let the community know immediately.**
- **Q:** Are staff required to be vaccinated to be allowed to work in the school?
 - **No, there is no current mandate that requires staff to be vaccinated in order to work in a school setting.**
- **Q:** Will the district be mandating vaccinations even if the State or Federal government does not?
 - **The district plans to follow all State and Federal mandates regarding vaccines.** If there is a change at any time to require vaccinations, we will inform the public immediately.
- **Q:** Has there been any information shared with the schools on when a vaccine will be available for children under 12 years of age?
 - **The schools have not been privy to any that is different or more in depth than the same news shared publicly.** As of today, I have no information to share regarding if and/or when a vaccine may become available for children under 12 years of age.

Social Distancing (SD)

In [The Road Forward](#) the term, "Practicable" is used often to refer to when something can be implemented and when it may not be able to be. The strict rule that must be followed is that we must operate on our traditional full day schedule, for all students. As a result of this directive, much of what we were able to implement last year when we had small percentages of students in-person will not be able to be implemented when we have 100% of our students. Social Distancing is one of the big ones and I know one of the ones on people's minds. I want to be both clear and realistic in sharing our approach. Here is how we are approaching this important topic knowing that in order for us to meet the mandate, SD will not be possible in the way it was last year:

- **Q:** What will social distancing look like for the start of the school year?
 - **Buses** - There will **not be any SD** on busing to and from school. As above all students will be required to be masked while on a school bus.
 - **Classrooms** - This will be on an as possible and practicable case by case basis. Some classrooms are simply too small to manage SD, while some spaces are more apt to do so. We will be reviewing spaces and you will hear more from your child's school on specific details. Assume that SD in classrooms will not be happening to a high degree.

- **Hallways and open areas** - With a full complement of students, we do not see SD as practicable in these areas. We will put some measures in place, but again, our schools do not have the kind of free space that makes it realistic to manage this when all students are present.
- **Outdoors** - This is a place where it is easier to manage the space, but of course, a place where students themselves will be more prone to being close to friends. Masks are not required for outside programming at this time.
- **Q:** In absence of SD, how will you manage any need for contact tracing?
 - **When applicable**, students will have assigned seats so that we can best assess who may be a close contact to another.

Daily Health Screenings

- **Q:** Will there be daily health screening forms to fill out again this year?
 - **We will discontinue the use of the Daily Health Form and temperature checks.** The school community has demonstrated its compliance with these daily protocols, keeping students home and staff remaining home when exhibiting any COVID- related symptoms, which in turn has kept our South Brunswick community a safe place.
- **Q:** Will there be a Daily Reminder about the importance of making sure my child does not have a temperature and is not exhibiting any Covid-like symptoms?
 - **Yes, you will receive a daily email reminder to make sure your child is symptom free before sending them to school.**

Quarantine Rules

We will continue to quarantine positive cases and close contact cases as per DOH guidelines. **The NJ DOE just released guidance on “[Educating Students During Quarantine](#)”.**

- **Q:** What will the district do if a student needs to be quarantined for an extended period of time due to a Covid related matter?
 - **For a student that is quarantined for an extended period of time (usually 10 days unless extenuating circumstances) due to a Covid related matter, we will provide virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction.** As this guidance just came to us yesterday, we are still working through how this will be accomplished to ensure a continuation of learning.
- **Q:** What are the current travel rules that may require quarantine?
 - [Please click here for information regarding quarantine rules and restrictions regarding domestic and international travel](#)
- **Q:** When might my child be required to quarantine?
 - **When they have** received a positive Covid diagnosis
 - When they have been found to be a close contact of a person that has been diagnosed with Covid.
 - In certain instances after traveling (please see above link).
 - When they exhibit Covid-like symptoms as follows:
 - **At least two of the following symptoms:** fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose;
 - **OR At least one of the following symptoms:** cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder.

- **Please note that as of now, we are not required to quarantine vaccinated individuals who have been exposed to a person who has tested positive.** However, unvaccinated individuals still may be required to quarantine if exposed to a positive case.

Useful Links & Resources

[The Road Forward](#)
[The latest CDC school guidance](#)
[The latest from American Pediatrics on school reopening](#)
[Executive Order 251 requiring masks in all public schools for staff and students](#)

Continuing Protocols

As you all know, the pandemic is not behind us just yet, and we plan to continue to implement strategies to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff as we begin the process of returning to normal operations. Our goal remains to get back to the normalcy of in-person learning while managing health related issues.

Protocols that will remain in place for the start of the 2021-2022 school year:

- We will continue to regularly reinforce proper hand hygiene routines and respiratory etiquette.
- We will maximize physical distancing whenever possible.
- We will maintain strict cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
- We will comply with all NJDOH, NJDOE and Governor's health and safety guidance

OTHER IMPORTANT OPENING OF SCHOOL "NON-COVID" INFORMATION

2021–2022 School Calendar

The first day of school for students is Thursday, September 9th. As was previously shared, at our July 22nd BOE meeting the Board approved the revision of the 2021-2022 school calendar to reflect the observance of Juneteenth with schools closed on June 17th. In addition, May 31st will now be a regular day of school. [Please click here to view the revised calendar](#)

Genesis Parent Portal

The Genesis Parent Portal forms will open on August 16th for parents to complete and update emergency contact information along with AUP authorization and Web and Media Consent. Students in Grades 6-12 will also need to acknowledge the Student Code of Conduct and AUP in their Genesis Student Portal Accounts. We ask that these important documents be updated/completed as soon as possible. Later in the month, Genesis will also display K-5 Homeroom Assignments and 6-8 Unit Assignments. Grades 6-8 and 9-12 student schedules with teacher names should appear in Genesis the first few days of September. You will receive a School Messenger reminder with these dates. **Bus schedules will be available in the parent portal starting Aug 16th.**

Employment Opportunities

The summer months are also a time to ensure that all positions are properly staffed. As you have noted from a previous communication, we are still in need of filling some positions. [Please click here to view our communication of July 22nd sharing various employment opportunities.](#)

In Summary...

As the first day of school approaches, additional information will be shared as it becomes available. Please enjoy these remaining days of summer and keep an eye out for any additional updates as we get closer to September.

I expect that there will still be more questions as we approach September. I want you to know that your questions are welcome and will be answered promptly. In fact, we may share those questions and answers in future communications. While I can't imagine that any of us wanted to be back in this situation, this is where we are and the health and safety of our students, staff and this community will remain at the forefront of our decision making. With that said, our first important move is to **UNIFY...then REBUILD... and ultimately, ensure that we THRIVE!**

Unifying does not mean we all must agree, but we are stronger when we respect each other, our differences and our belief in what is best for our own children. From there we will be well positioned to rebuild the foundation that has cracked under the weight of Covid – cracked, but never broken. Our commitment to this community has not and will never waiver in ensuring that our students and this Town continue to thrive!! Together – we can ensure that outcome!

Best Regards,



Scott