

GARFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ANNA SCIACCA

Superintendent of Schools

August 1, 2021

To All Members of the Garfield School Community :

WELCOME TO THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR!

We look forward to the opening of school with in-person instruction for all students on September 8, 2021. The school year will begin with one session days on September 8,9, and 10 and full days will resume on September 13th. We have been working hard to prepare for a positive start to the new school year despite the many challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has presented over the past eighteen months.

Governor Murphy mandated the return to in-person instruction in all New Jersey schools without the option for remote learning or the implementation of a hybrid model of learning for the 2021-2022 school year. While it signals the return to normalcy, there remains health and safety concerns that must be addressed. The Garfield District has prepared and posted a plan on the district website entitled, *Garfield District Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services*, which provides the school community with our specific protocols for the new school year. Please note that this plan is a living document and is subject to immediate revisions in the event of unexpected occurrences with the number of Covid-19 and variant cases. You can access this plan by opening the following link: http://www.gboe.org/district_safe_return_in_person_instruction_2021-22.

As noted in the Safe Return Plan, the requirement to wear masks was optional for staff and students during our summer programs, however, this may not be the case when school opens in September. The District Restart and Recovery Committee will reconvene on August 23rd to discuss the most recent Covid-19 data (and variants) in our community, county, and state as well as the most up to date recommendations of the CDC , Department of Health, and the New Jersey Department of Education. A final decision will be rendered prior to the opening of school and notification will be released immediately.

The ESSER funding has afforded the district the opportunity to invest in : upgrades to facilities to improve air quality; additional academic and social -emotional resources ; supplies to properly sanitize and clean the schools; mobile air purification systems to improve air quality in all classrooms and offices; educational technology, including hardware, software, and connectivity; staff training; and extended day academic and enrichment programs designed to successfully address learning loss. The district is currently exploring the possibility of installing window AC units in elementary classrooms and investing in a total replacement of the Garfield High School HVAC system , which will include air conditioning.

The district will prioritize emotional health and wellness in the 2021-2022 school year and focus on supporting students as they reacclimate to school and deal with anxiety and fears caused by the pandemic. Social -emotional activities have been built into the curriculum at all levels. Additional counselors have been hired to meet the needs of our students and the district has employed the services of an outside counseling service that parents, students,

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and families can utilize from the home. Parents should reach out to the school principal, teachers, and counselors if any child is struggling and needs additional social -emotional support at any point throughout the school year.

Learning loss caused by the pandemic and remote learning will be addressed through the process of learning acceleration; teaching grade level content consistent with the New Jersey Learning Standards at all grades and providing appropriate support as needed to fill in the gaps. We will continue to implement RTI (Response to Intervention), a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs , throughout all grades in the district.

Upgrades to the district facilities include upgrades to the infrastructure to support an increase in internet bandwidth, gym floor renovations, a new theatre at Garfield High School, security camera upgrades and installation of panic buttons that directly alert law enforcement of emergencies , new STEAM centers in all schools, outdoor classroom at GMS, opening of the Success Academy at GHS, upgrades to equipment in district kitchens, upgrade to district phone system, new card access system for entry into schools, and painting in schools throughout the district.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it would extend universal free lunch to all students for the 2021-2022 school year, regardless of income eligibility, in an effort to reach any student who is experiencing food insecurity in the household. **The Garfield District will provide free breakfast and free lunch to all students in the district until June 30, 2022.** Parents are advised to complete the lunch survey that is posted on parent portal.

Covid-19 vaccinations are available through the city and county for individuals twelve years and older. The Covid vaccine is not mandatory for staff or students at the present time. Please continue to check the Garfield District website, www.gboe.org for updated information regarding distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine .

Handbooks for Pre-K, Elementary Schools, Middle School, and High School will be posted on the district and school websites with information regarding attendance procedures, school schedules, disciplinary codes, and other relevant information. It is important to familiarize yourself with the handbooks prior to the start of the school year.

Two -way communication is essential to the success of student learning. It is important that the school has the most updated contact information at all times so that you can receive voice and text notifications from the school/district . Remember to check the district and school websites regularly, as well as district social media accounts and reach out to the principal, teachers, and counselors if you have any questions or concerns. We are working together to achieve success for each and every student.

I want to take this opportunity to thank parents and members of the Garfield district staff for your ongoing cooperation and support throughout these very challenging times. We look forward to better days ahead as we focus on health and safety and student achievement in the upcoming year.

I extend my best wishes for a safe, healthy, successful , and happy school year as we continue to pursue our **Vision of Champions, “ to Encourage, Inspire, and Support every individual to achieve more.”** Enjoy the rest of the summer and be well.

Kind Regards,

Anna Sciacca

Superintendent of Garfield Public Schools

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