

Island Park Union Free School District

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July 31, 2020

Dear Island Park Families,

We hope this letter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy!

Over the past month the District's Reopening Task Force and Committees have been working tirelessly on developing a reentry plan that is in compliance with guidelines and guidance from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

Based upon a careful analysis of the guidance and guidelines provided to us from these State agencies, including the mandatory social distancing requirements in classrooms and on school buses, our current fleet of school buses (District-owned and contracted) as well as the limited staffing at both Francis X Hegarty and Lincoln Orens Middle School, we are planning a return for the start of the 2020-2021 school year, using a Hybrid Model. This is a combination of in-person and remote instruction that divides classes into two cohorts; it will be in place for the first day of school.

Although current staffing levels are insufficient to accommodate the expanded number of classrooms needed to ensure social distancing through the use of cohorts in the All In-Person Model, the District is committed to meeting with parents and district committee groups as we move forward this fall to continue planning for a phased-in approach to the return of all students that we call the All In-Person Model, should our students and employees remain healthy.

What is a Hybrid Model of Instruction?

A Hybrid Model of instruction is a teaching and learning approach where alternating groups of students (cohorts) physically attend school on designated days of the week. While some students attend school in-person, other students attend remotely. In our new model of distance or remote learning, students who are not in the school building will be engaged in both "live teaching" (synchronous) and independent learning (asynchronous). On days students attend class remotely, they will also participate in classroom instruction with their teacher(s) and peers through the use of Google Classroom, Google Meet, and classroom webcams with broadcasting capability. Throughout the school day, students will follow a schedule, receive mini-lessons (live instruction) from the teacher, interact with peers and complete all assignments. In addition, daily or period-by-period attendance will be taken, regardless if the students are participating in-person or remotely.

Given the possibility that communities may experience spikes in COVID-19 cases at any point during the school year, which may prompt short or long-term school closures, our District has developed this Hybrid Model with dual, parallel schedules. First and foremost, this keeps students and employees safely distanced in our school buildings whereby all can make the most of our excellent facilities and resources. Yet, in the event of a school closure when students have to learn in a fully remote environment, instruction will continue to focus on "core" subject areas as well as special areas classes, following the same daily schedule. In addition, all instruction will continue to be aligned to the New York State Learning Standards. In this way, students will not encounter conflicts

wherein synchronous lessons for different subjects are offered simultaneously. Remote learning opportunities for all students (Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8) will include a greater emphasis on synchronous instruction, with teachers providing live instruction and lessons to students using classroom webcams and Google Meet. Teachers will ensure that their students are directly engaged with them and their class peers in experiential learning on a regular basis. This revamped model increases access to live teaching (synchronous) experiences and reduces the family burden to support student learning at home.

The Hybrid Model allows the District to maximize in-person instruction, on a rotating basis, while balancing equity, capacity, social distancing, PPE, feasibility, special considerations for students with disabilities, English language learners and students experiencing homelessness with our current staffing levels. As previously noted, although the District will begin the 2020-2021 school year in a Hybrid Model, we will continue to research, plan, and develop plans for a phased in approach to the All In-Person Model.

Please join us for a Special Business Meeting of the Board of Education on Monday, August 3, 2020 at 6:30 PM when I will share the District's Reopening Plan (including more details about the student schedules), with the community via WebEx. The District's Reopening Plan, which is subject to NYS approval, can be found on the District's website at <http://www.ips.k12.ny.us/>

Fondly,

Vincent Randazzo
Assistant Superintendent

