



## **EAST RUTHERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **Office of the Superintendent of Schools**

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Good afternoon Parents/Guardians & School Community Members:

On June 26, 2020, our former Commissioner of Education, Lamont Repollet, released “The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education.” After working on our district-wide plan for over a month, the NJDOE’s plan was revised on July 29, 2020. On July 23, 2020, the East Rutherford School District and East Rutherford Board of Education approved our Restart and Recovery Plan, which included hybrid and virtual options for our students. The NJDOE required submission of this plan by July 31, 2020.

Immediately after our submission, on August 3, 2020, the NJDOE once again released further revisions to “The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education” and released a “Reopening Checklist,” prompting immediate revisions to our plan. Also, on August 3, 2020, Governor Murphy mandated that all students must wear masks, which required further modifications to our plans that were established based on the NJDOE’s previous guidance.

Since the release of East Rutherford’s Restart and Recovery Tentative Schedule (2020-2021) on July 24, 2020, several unforeseen developments have taken place.

On August 13, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 175, which allows for school districts to provide full-time remote instruction to all students pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, if “unable to satisfy the health and safety requirements for in-person instruction.” Also on August 13, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Health released a very detailed document further outlining health and safety protocols for public schools.

Since the release of “The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education” was released back on June 26, the East Rutherford School District and East Rutherford Board of Education immediately took a proactive approach and hired a Certified Industrial Hygienist, Dr. Richard Lynch, from Environmental Safety Management Company to evaluate the ventilation systems of all three existing buildings that make up our school district.

Environmental Safety Management Company was contracted in early July and the assessment took place from the end of July till mid-August. During that time, the District reviewed the findings of the assessment with its Board of Education, HVAC company, maintenance department and Dr. Richard Lynch, Certified Industrial Hygienist, in which the district received a comprehensive report pertaining to the air quality of each school building. The data received indicated that McKenzie School and the Faust Preschool Annex ventilation systems met all the safety requirements for reopening schools for McKenzie and Preschool students on September 8th.

However, the data we received pertaining to the Faust Middle School will not allow the District to open school for in-person instruction for those students on September 8th, as planned. The data received indicated that Faust Middle School ventilation system is in need of dire repair in order to meet the required standards and as such would not be safe for students to return given the strict requirements and mandate for reopening schools.

All middle school students in Grades 5-8 will start the school year off remotely until the District has exhausted all possibilities, to ensure that students can return to school for in-person instruction safely. The District will continue to take every measure in trying to remedy this ventilation concern, however I would like to caution parents/guardians that the possibility of reopening the middle school building for in-person instruction for the school year is tenuous at this time.

McKenzie School and the Faust Preschool Annex will reopen as scheduled with the hybrid in-person model and virtual component for those parents/guardians who have made this choice. Please refer to the Restart/Reopening document on the district's website to familiarize yourself with return to school safety protocols and guidelines.

Finally, please keep in mind that the health and safety of our students and staff has been and will continue to be at the forefront of our decision-making process.

More information will be released in the coming days from your child's building principal (e.g. In-Person & Virtual Student Schedules, Supplies Lists, Student Handbooks and 2020-2021 Start-up Packets & Childcare).

Thank you for your continued patience and support. Be well.

Sincerely,

***Giovanni A. Giancaspro***

Superintendent of Schools