

# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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### Superintendent of Schools

*Community Message SY 21-22 No. 6*

**Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.**

October 21, 2021

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Staff,

We are grateful for the collaboration among the community, families, administration, staff, and students in continuing to keep our COVID-19 mitigation strategies and new opportunities in teaching and learning moving forward. I provided a glimpse into district highlights at the [October 18 Board of Education meeting](#) which included our further evaluation of the use of shields, update on pooled testing, structured planning for our reading initiative including hiring math and reading interventionists, continued equity initiative, and the creation of our COVID-19 Dashboard. Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction Kalisha Morgan will present at the next Board meeting about our progress with equity and reading.

Please see below for more details.

#### **COVID-19 Dashboard**

To help keep you informed, we have added a [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to the district website that provides data of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases among staff and students. The Dashboard link found under Announcements will also be added to our Quick Links shortly.

#### **Pooled Testing Update**

Ginkgo Bioworks has responded to an article in *Biospace* assuring us it stands by all contractual obligations. The company continues to be a State-approved and NJ Department of Health vendor. **Testing will begin the week of October 25.** All schedules and pertinent information can be found [on the website](#).

#### **Travel Guidance**

The holidays are right around the corner, and we wanted you to have travel guidance with enough time to plan for the Thanksgiving and December holiday breaks. We understand this is often a time when families visit relatives and gather together. As we continue to follow the science, please see the [CDC guidance for travel](#) in the last row of the linked table. For your convenience, I am including that row at the end of my message.

If your children are unvaccinated and you plan on traveling during these times, they will **automatically** be set up with virtual learning due to their need to quarantine. This virtual period will be for 10 days if you elect not to test, or seven days with a negative test (see link or information at the end of this message). **We value you as a partner and ask that you provide your children’s teachers/principals your travel plans a week in advance** which will assist us in preparing virtual learning upon your return, allowing us to best serve your children.

**Shields**

Beginning **Monday, November 8**, desk shields may be used on a voluntary basis in classrooms. We will continue to use them in the lunch rooms for indoor lunch periods. If you do not wish your child to have a **desk shield in the classroom**, please inform the principal by **Friday, October 29**, so that we have enough time for it to be properly removed.

**Communications Survey**

Please note that the [communications survey](#) which was sent out in collaboration with the PTA Council will close on October 25. Your feedback is important to us.

*If you weren’t at the Board Meeting on Monday evening, you missed my foreshadowing, “Snow days are a-comin’!” Stay tuned for plans for this year’s snow days in next week’s message.*

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jonathan Ponds  
Superintendent

<b>Travel Guidance - Unvaccinated</b>	<b>Travel Guidance - Fully Vaccinated</b>
The CDC recommends that travel be delayed for those who are not fully vaccinated. Unvaccinated staff and students must continue to follow the CDC Guidelines which require 10 days of quarantine without testing or 7 days of quarantine with a negative test taken on days 3-5 after travel.	For those who are vaccinated, NJ residents returning home after travel do not need to be quarantined but should still follow travel guidance from the CDC, NJDOH, and all local health and safety protocols. Individuals should test 3-5 days and monitor for symptoms after travel.