



July 24, 2020

Dear Parents of the Rumson School District,

As the hot and hazy days of August approach, we are all normally just turning our thoughts to the return to school. This summer, however, such considerations have been with us from the last day of the 2019-2020 school year when our students signed out from their virtual hangout with their teacher for the last time, and the purple “graduation-mobile” pulled away from the final 8th grade student’s driveway. Within these thoughts, anxiety and anticipation associated with reopening has increased exponentially, fueled by federal debates on school reopening, intermittent announcements from Governor Murphy on New Jersey’s plan for the reopening of schools, and the state of infections from coronavirus throughout our country. Through this all, the Rumson School District has been focused on our reopening plan, ensuring neither the health of our students and staff nor the continued delivery of strong instruction are compromised.

The following is a framework for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year for both Deane-Porter and Forrestdale Schools. As you review our framework, please know that **while we anticipate starting the school year in Mode B-Hybrid**, movement to either Mode A- Full In-Person or Mode C- Full Virtual could occur at any time (Please note that the schedule of our preschool program will be communicated separately by Mr. Michael Snyder, Supervisor of Special Education & Preschool Program Coordinator). The modes of this plan will be implemented in response to trends and patterns of COVID-19, as guided by our local Pandemic Response Team in coordination with the New Jersey Department of Health, New Jersey Department of Education, and/or the New Jersey Governor’s Office. With that said, it is critical to emphasize that movement from one mode to another has a great deal to do with the behaviors of our community, including the maintenance of social distancing, extension of school cohorting beyond the school day, wearing of masks, implementation of handwashing and respiratory hygiene, and personal monitoring and response to COVID-19 symptoms.

Framework of the 2020-2021 Opening of the Rumson School District

Mode A - Full In-Person

- 100% of students will attend school in-person on a schedule designated by the district with appropriate health hygiene protocols in place.
- Students will follow their 9-period schedule following a six-day cycle with a 1:00pm dismissal.
- The next step would be to move to the full day dismissal schedule.

Mode B - Hybrid

- Students will attend school in-person at a reduced attendance of 50% of the students over alternating days with appropriate social distancing and health hygiene protocols. The remaining 50% not in person will engage in virtual schooling on alternating days.

- All students will be split into cohort A or cohort B, keeping families in the same cohort.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohorts A & B Virtual	Cohort A In-Person Cohort B Virtual	Cohort A Virtual Cohort B In-Person	Cohort A In-Person Cohort B Virtual	Cohort A Virtual Cohort B In-Person

- The in-person days will include a schedule of core subjects such as ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies.
- The virtual days will consist of a schedule of specials, such as Art, Music, STEM, etc.
- On the virtual days students will also be scheduled to meet with their core subject teachers between 1:00pm and 3:00pm.

Mode C- Full Virtual

- 100% of students will attend school virtually.
- This mode follows the same schedule as Mode B- Hybrid except students will rotate between their A/B days continuously without the Monday A/B cohort virtual day.

FAQ

1. Why is Monday a virtual day for both cohorts A and B?

This will enable a schedule that maintains consistency with which days their children are in-person or virtual from week to week. In addition, we have several Mondays where the district is closed and having a cohort attend on Mondays would create an imbalance by having one cohort miss in-person instruction more than the other.

2. Why are we alternating between A/B days?

Alternating days allows a student to see their teacher in person without too many virtual days occurring between each in-person session, leading to better continuity of instruction. It will also enable teachers to send print materials and other materials home with their students regularly rather than always relying on computers for their virtual day learning.

3. Why are we following a 1:00PM dismissal?

The early dismissal will allow us to eliminate the lunch/recess period. The guidance requires the maintenance of social distancing during these activities, which would mean students need to eat in their classrooms isolated from each other, and recess would require no contact/no equipment activities. With students going home at 1:00pm they can access better lunch options and recess activities with siblings and parents. Also, the early dismissal allows teachers to meet with the students on a virtual instruction day, giving them access to their teacher five days a week.

4. Why are some subjects on the in-person days and some subjects on the virtual days?

By having fewer subjects on a given day, the district can offer more in-person instruction with English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and World Language. In addition, it reduces the number of transitions and contact points with other students and teachers during the school day, minimizing risk.

5. Why is Mode C- Full Virtual following the same A/B cohort model as Mode B- Hybrid?

This allows for smaller groups to be on their virtual hangouts with teachers and maintains a lower student-to-teacher ratio which we found necessary in our virtual instruction last school year. Unfortunately, we could move to full virtual instruction by class, grade-level, school, or district at any moment. Having a similar schedule would allow us to make this transition from Mode to Mode more easily.

With the release of this framework, three items will follow on **July 31st**. The first is the full Restart Plan for the Rumson School District, outlining routines, protocols, and strategies for delivering instruction and maintaining a healthy environment. The second is a survey seeking information from you on whether you will be opting your child into or out of in-person instruction; specifics of this survey are contingent upon further guidance expected from the New Jersey Department of Education. Finally, an invite to virtual meetings with my administrative team and me to address your questions.

While we desire nothing short of a “mask-free” full school day where kids and teachers can high five each other for our children in their formative years, this pandemic requires us to build something different. I hope you join me in facing this pandemic with the grit and resilience demanded of us as we make the best of the circumstances. Our administrators, teachers, staff members, and Board of Education have the confidence we can deliver the high-quality education we are known for through this plan while striving for the healthiest environment possible, and I encourage you to be a believer as well! We have come this far, so let's run, what is hopefully, the last leg of this virus's race together.

With pride,

Dr. John E. Bormann
Superintendent of the Borough of Rumson School District