



Reopening - The First Week and Moving Forward

September 11, 2010

Dear Irvington School Community,

After months of planning and having navigated numerous challenges that were lined with anxiety, we were thrilled to launch the 2020-21 school year on Tuesday. While this week (and next week) exclusively feature 100% distance learning, it was an energizing experience to once again connect with our students. In doing so, we have taken important steps to build school community and to venture into what will be an exciting year of learning.

In each school, we are taking important steps to get ready for our students' return to in-person learning on September 21st consistent with our phased-in reopening calendar. Throughout each building, we have been installing appropriate signage to reinforce all health and safety protocols and to manage traffic flow. We have also received all deliveries of the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) necessary, including the delivery of hand washing stations that will be installed in each school. Additionally, our talented maintenance staff has crafted numerous clear plastic dividers that have been installed in many locations throughout schools to provide for personal safety when proper social distancing may be in question. Supporting these measures there has been thorough and on-going professional learning on the following topics:

- Health and safety protocols
- Social-emotional supports and learning
- Technology use
- Instructional design for distance and hybrid learning
- Building school community with a focus on equity, inclusion and diversity

The three Superintendent's Conference Days last week provided for the essential focus on all that is related to the reopening of school during the pandemic. Additionally, we had an amazing opportunity to launch the District's partnership with the NYU Metropolitan Center. This initiative will be comprehensive, will span multiple school years and address the topic of equity, inclusion and diversity. In an important first step, all District employees participated in a keynote presentation led by Dr. David Kirkand of NYU and then engaged in meaningful, building-level breakout sessions. More details on this work will be shared with the school community in the near future.

As I have stated many times throughout the District's planning process to reopen schools, we will be flexible and adapt our plans as necessary to support the health and safety of students and staff and to provide the very best learning experiences for our students. Here, there are multiple examples of the adjustments that have been made including the 100% Distance Learning Option and the four (4) half-day attendance model for kindergarten and first grade. Having experienced the first four days of distance learning, we have learned that there is more we can do to enrich the learning experience by promoting more engagement between the students learning remotely and those physically present in the classroom. Across the District, we will continue to take small, cautious steps to integrate Google Meets to provide for more interpersonal interactions. This may include the use of

the live classroom stream to be shared exclusively through the secure Google Classroom, so students can see one another. In doing so, the video or images of it will never be shared publicly or used for other purposes. As mentioned above, we will take slow and deliberate steps to ensure successful integration, while balancing the limitations that are being widely reported in the media about the “overload” that technology platforms being used in schools such as Google Classroom/Meet and Zoom are experiencing. Further, at all times, the use of technology will always be focused on supporting the development of the classroom community and to advance student learning.

Over the coming days, you will continue to receive more information from the District and your child(ren)’s schools regarding important operational details, such as the Food Services communication that was sent out yesterday. Early next week, you will receive directions on how to complete the mandatory daily health screening including how to download the app or to access the web-based application. So, please continue to look for these informative communications.

Together, we will continue to adjust to what schooling will look like for the foreseeable future. What is critical to this process is that we remain focused on each other’s well-being and continue to demonstrate the care, empathy and compassion for all that we are enduring during these very complicated times. As a school community, we will continue to grow and learn while becoming more united in our work to prepare every student, every day for their best possible future.

Take good care,

Kris

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