



A MESSAGE FROM:

The Principal

TO: Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
 FROM: Joseph J. Occhino
 DATE: August 26, 2020
 SUBJECT: Parent Letter on Revised Schedule
 LINK(S): [AM PM Bell Schedule](#)
[COVID-19 Pre-Entry Form](#)

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

As the summer break comes to an end, we still find ourselves planning and responding to COVID-19 and this unprecedented health crisis. This has been, and continues to be, a challenging time for all of us. Throughout the summer, we have worked diligently to review guidance from state and local officials, and we continuously seek input from parents and other stakeholders as we prepare to re-open Northern Highlands for in-person instruction.

Over the last three weeks, we have seen many surrounding school districts and districts statewide moving towards a full-time remote learning environment. However, we understand the need for our students to return to school in some capacity while also doing our best to minimize the transmission of the virus. That said, and to address the needs of our entire school community and ensure the safety of our students and staff, we have made the following two revisions to our Restart and Recovery Plan:

- **Daily Schedule** - our hybrid schedule still provides in-person instruction; however, it no longer includes a traditional lunch period. Although the state's guidelines for re-opening schools does not prohibit the use of cafeterias, we recognize the additional risk in having our students gather with no face coverings while eating their lunch with approximately 200 of their schoolmates (albeit six-feet apart), can potentially expose students to the virus.
 - As you can see on the revised [daily schedule](#), students will be dismissed at 12:29 p.m. A grab-and-go lunch will be available for those students who may want to purchase food before leaving the building. The good news regarding this change is that it allows for the same instructional time as had been previously planned with the addition of an extra 1 hour and 15 minutes of extra help at the end of the day. Although lunch was moved to a grab and go at the end of the day, student contact time has increased.
 - Students are expected to return home by 2:00 p.m. at which time they can attend the virtual Highlands Enrichment and Learning Period from 2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Students can sign into class (based on the periods that were in session that morning) with their classroom teacher for additional help, work on collaborative projects with classmates (via Zoom breakout rooms), or communicate directly with their classroom teacher. Students can schedule time with their school counselor who will also schedule meetings with students. The HELP sessions will run Tuesday through Friday on an AM or PM day mirroring the AM or PM schedule every day that school is in session.
- **Electronic COVID-19 Form** - in the parent letter that you received from me on August 18, it was indicated that all parents/guardians must complete the electronic attestation form and submit it electronically through the Genesis Parent Portal. Upon further discussion, we will now require that the [COVID-19 Pre-Entry to School Daily Form](#) be printed, completed by the parent/guardian, signed and dated by both the parent/guardian and student, and submitted in order to gain entry to school for in-person instruction. If the student does not bring his/her

form to school, the student will not be permitted to enter the building until his/her parent sends/brings a form to the school. We are sharing this information with you now as we do not want to cause a major inconvenience to parents and students.

Thank you for your patience. Even if there are certain aspects of our plan that you may not agree with, we hope you know that we care deeply about our students and staff and that we will continue to work hard to do what is best for them.

In closing, with only 14 days before school reopens, we encourage our students to take all necessary health precautions as we head into a new school year. It is very important for your children to avoid large gatherings and to wear a face covering when around people outside your immediate family. The ability to maintain in-person instruction will be directly connected to our students and staff's ability to remain healthy and safe, so ensuring everyone comes to school at the start of the year healthy is essential.

Our students, families, and staff make our school community the caring place it is! We will continue to get through this together.

Be safe, stay healthy!

Joseph J. Occhino
Principal

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