



NEW PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff,

Good afternoon. Since my letter to you last week, we continue to navigate our way through some challenges that may have you concerned as a student, parent, and/or educator. We witnessed last Friday's social media influence on school security, and we have observed an increase in positive COVID cases locally, statewide, and nationally.

I want to assure you that our number one priority is the safety of our students and staff. First and foremost, as a public-school district, we are guided by statute, regulations, policy, and executive orders. There are times during which a district may be authorized to respond to an issue based on their individual circumstances. Those responses directly correspond to the individual circumstances of the given school district. They do not change the standard set forth by statute, regulations, policy, or executive order. Therefore, you may witness or hear of another district taking a position or responding to a circumstance that is particular to their community, but that response does not mean that we are going to react in the same way. In fact, we may not take any action because it does not apply to us, or because we do not believe it is in the best interest of our school community.

Our community has always taken school security very seriously. We have invested a significant amount of time and resources to ensure our safety, while always following best practices. In New Providence, we have a long-standing relationship with our police department. We collaborate with them on a regular basis, and we immediately communicate with each other when there is a potential threat or safety concern in our community. In the event that we believe we need to communicate with our students, staff, and parents, you can be assured, we will do so in a timely and transparent manner.

We respect the open lines of communication, and want you to know that if a safety matter is credible and we are communicating with you, we will likely call for some action within our community. We believe in this sentiment, and intend to continue this very important tradition of communication with you. This sentiment is shared by both the school district and the police department. Please note that our silence, on occasion, is intentional for critical reasons and best practices.

With regard to the increase in positive COVID cases, at this time we are not being asked to close or go to a modified schedule by any of the Department of Health or Department of Education officials. In fact, we are encouraged to stay open for all of the critical reasons that we have shared and discussed over the past two years. Other districts or private schools may have

circumstances that require them to adjust their programs or schedules, but these decisions may not apply to the circumstances in New Providence.

In the spirit of transparency, this week, we changed the format of our COVID letters to the community in order to provide clarity with the uptick in cases. Therefore, we will only have one letter disseminated by the end of business each day capturing any of the staff and student cases from all four schools. The Monday afternoon letter will be inclusive of any activity over the weekend.

Finally, I want to share some updates with you from Governor Murphy's recent briefing, and my recent conversation with the Westfield Department of Health:

1. There are over 100 current free testing sites in NJ, and there will be an increase in sites in the near future. You can assess this information here: COVID19.nj.gov/freetest.
2. The Department of Health has discontinued the regional risk factors when it comes to quarantine.
3. Our quarantine protocols are consistent with current guidance.
4. There are currently no children hospitalized in NJ due to COVID.
5. The CDC will likely change the definition of "fully vaccinated" to include the booster. NJ will likely follow this new definition and is encouraging vaccination.
6. The public health response to COVID is the same regardless of the variant.
7. There are no updates on the January expiration of Executive Orders.
8. A "Test to Stay" policy is being considered at the State level for schools.
9. Ongoing monitoring of hospitals is the priority. The number of hospitalizations is significantly lower at this time despite the rise in cases.

Please trust that we are always working behind the scenes to ensure that our schools continue to be open, and are a safe place for our community to thrive. We appreciate your trust and patience. Thank you for all of your support.

I wish you and your families a happy holiday season.

Sincerely,



David M. Miceli, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools