



*Serving With Pride The
Township of Manalapan
and the
Borough of Englishtown*

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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March created a crisis situation which required quick action throughout the country. Schools had little time to prepare and immediately had to shift to a complete virtual/distance learning environment. Considering that we were required to reinvent education on the fly, I do believe that the administration, teachers, and staff did an incredible job in Manalapan and Englishtown.

That being said, I would also be the first person to state that the education your children received between March 16th and June 19th, while acceptable considering the circumstances, was not close to the quality education that the children of Manalapan and Englishtown have come to receive on a daily basis. The challenge we are now facing moving forward is to ensure that children will receive the quality of education parents have come to expect from the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School district during this ongoing pandemic.

The district administration has been thinking about this issue since late spring when it became apparent that the reopening of school in September 2020 would be like no other. The Governor's long awaited guidance was released on June 26th. Consistent with that guidance the district had already established a Board of Education committee and an administrative committee focused on reopening. We are in the process of expanding the current Liaison Committee so that teachers from all grade levels and special areas can be part of the development of our reopening plan. I have already contacted the PTA/PTO presidents to form the basis of a parent advisory committee. Please contact the President of the PTA in your child's building if you want to be part of that process.

As expected the most significant factor in the guidance was the requirement of social distancing on buses, in classrooms and all large spaces in school buildings. I am sure you can understand the significant impact that will have on the reopening plans when many buses have close to fifty children on them and classrooms average between 21 and 25 students throughout the district.

While we are only in the early stages of developing the plan, it is clear that with social distancing in place we have only one viable option: an A/B hybrid option where half of the student population attends school in the school building on the A day and the other half attends school in the school building on the B day. On the days a student is home, they will follow a virtual/distance learning schedule. The only alternative would be to require all students and staff to wear masks throughout the entire day, from the moment they enter the bus until they exit the bus at the end of the day. While this would allow us to have all students attend everyday I do not believe it is a viable option.

Our intent over the next two months is to maximize the quality of our instruction in the content areas and enhance the virtual experience to increase student engagement and live interaction with the teachers. During the week of July 20th I will be scheduling a live virtual community meeting to explain the rationale for decisions made as well as share the details of the reopening plan that have been determined by that time.

Our nation is in the midst of the worst health crisis in the last one hundred years. While the unfortunate reality is that it will have an impact on the quality of your child's education, you can be assured that we, with your support, will do everything we can to minimize that impact.

I look forward to speaking with all of you in the near future. If you have any questions feel free to contact my office. Stay healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John J. Marciante, Jr., Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

John J. Marciante, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools