



Dear Middletown School Community Families and Staff,

July 24, 2020

I hope this communication finds you well. I am writing to you today reflecting on the past week feeling thankful for all of the feedback our Return Planning Team received through the community survey and Town Halls. As a team, we remain committed to focusing our work in our belief the health, safety, and well-being of every member of our school community is at the forefront of our planning.

Recently, the [NYS Education Department \(NYSED\)](#) and [NYS Department of Health \(NYSDOH\)](#) released guidance for districts to follow regarding re-entry plans for schools. In addition, Governor Cuomo released an infection rate metric to determine whether our school campuses can open, and, in the first week in August, he will announce if students will be able to return to school.

Please know, our entire team wants nothing more than to bring back as many students as possible to our brick and mortar buildings. Nothing can take the place of the daily face-to-face interactions our children experience when attending our schools in person. Furthermore, I realize you need to plan for the fall and are anxiously seeking a better understanding of what September will look like for our entire school community. There has been a tremendous amount of guidance for our Return Planning Team to process in a very short amount of time. Complicating matters is the fluidity of the guidance. Shortly after the initial guidance was released we received two updates which included significant shifts in requirements causing our district to make pivots in our planning. This guidance has been designed to ensure we are thinking through various options for school re-entry where we honor academically rigorous programming, safety and well-being, healing, and inclusivity. This is a complex process and cannot be rushed. We will continue to monitor the science and refine our plan so the start of the 2020-2021 school year best meets the needs of our school community.

Our Return Planning Team must submit a plan to the state where the following scenarios are accounted for:

- In-Person Instruction: All students return to school and learn in our classrooms.
- Hybrid Instruction: Some students would be in school while others are learning from home.
- Remote Instruction: All students are learning from home with the understanding plans must include substantial daily interaction between students and teachers.

Since our closure in March, our teams have made return planning their top priority. We have been collecting data, procuring supplies, leveraging technology, and using stakeholder feedback in the event our 2020-2021 school year operated under very different circumstances given the constraints of the guidance and the pandemic.

It is possible we may need to delay our school year start date for students. If this is necessary, I will propose an adjusted calendar for the Board of Education's consideration in August.

Return planning developments will continue to be shared with the school community as we work throughout the summer. Thank you for your participation in this planning, patience, understanding and care as we take the time necessary, over the next few weeks, to develop the safest and most appropriate way to move forward as a school community.

With warm regard,

*Richard Del Moro*

Richard Del Moro, Superintendent of Schools