



# Ridgefield Public Schools

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*...valuing each and every student*

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*Dr. Letizia Pantoliano*  
*Interim Superintendent of Schools*

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January 8, 2021

Dear Ridgefield Families:

Cases of COVID-19 in Ridgefield and across the county remain high. The Ridgefield Public School District with the support of the Borough of Ridgefield Department of Health has decided to remain virtual. The reasons for remaining virtual are for the health and safety of the entire school community and for educational consistency. Although we have not had any cases of in district spread, we do continue to have positive cases as well as contacts of positive cases across our students and staff. As you are well aware, when an individual is positive or the contact of a positive individual for COVID-19, you must quarantine for up to 14 days. This situation requires classrooms to be remote and poses staffing issues when in-person. It is in the students' best educational interest to remain virtual and not deal with the uncertainty of returning to hybrid learning only to become virtual without notice due to a quarantine situation.

The vaccine is upon us and educators will be one of the first groups to receive it if they so choose. I believe that we are at the beginning of the return to in person learning. However, we must plan our return deliberately and allow the data to drive the pace of the return so that we do not end up in a situation where many classes return to hybrid instruction only to change back to virtual instruction with no notice due to a quarantine situation.

As of now, we are conducting a survey of our students who are in the Learning Center program to determine how many students would return to hybrid instruction. Based upon that data, we will determine how many classes will be brought back during phase one. If you are unsure if

your child is in the Learning Center, you may contact the school to inquire. Phase two will consist of a similar survey of remaining students in Shaler Academy and Bergen Boulevard School. Again, based upon the data, we will again make decisions as to when and how many classes to return. Phase three encompasses the same process for Slocum Skewes School and phase four would be Ridgefield Memorial High School. As we move through these phases, we move closer to a time when any educator who chooses to be vaccinated can and will be vaccinated thus severely limiting the need to quarantine and move back to virtual instruction from a hybrid model.

As I have said previously, families will be given at least a one-week notice prior to children returning for in-person instruction. You will know that the process for return to hybrid has begun for a particular child when you receive the survey from the child's principal asking if you would prefer to remain virtual or return to hybrid instruction.

Students should continue to follow their regular schedules. This decision is being made for the health, safety and well being of all as well as to ensure educational stability for students. I strongly encourage students to participate in the many wonderful virtual clubs and activities that the district has to offer. Per the NJSIAA, high school Boys and Girls basketball are scheduled to begin on January 11 with other sports to follow in subsequent seasons.

It is my profound hope that as we slowly return to in person instruction, it is a step toward permanently returning to full in person instruction, which is why it must be done in a slow and careful manner. All school and district buildings will remain staffed and school personnel are available to the school community. Rest assured that the district will continue to monitor the current COVID situation and make any adjustments necessary that will be in the best interests of the entire school community.

Please continue to be vigilant in our fight against COVID-19. All members of our school community should be wearing masks when in public, stay socially distant, and wash or sanitize hands frequently. Only these efforts can cause a reduction in cases in Ridgefield and facilitate a quicker return to in person instruction. We need the help and support of all community members

to make this happen. We need to eliminate the need for quarantining to facilitate a sustained transition back to any type of in person instruction or sports. If all necessary health guidelines are not followed, positive cases or contact with those individuals will negatively impact our ability to deliver meaningful and consistent instruction.

Thank you for your continued efforts during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Letizia Pantoliano

Interim Superintendent, Ridgefield Public Schools