



# RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Ridgewood School Community,

First, I would like to thank you for your understanding during these unprecedented times. None of us has ever been through a pandemic, and I certainly have never led a district through a reopening of schools under such fluctuating and uncertain conditions. I truly understand your frustration and stress. Over the past six months, we have experienced a dramatic shift in our work, school, and home experiences, and we are all longing for a return to normal.

From the district's perspective, we have labored over the development of the [Ridgewood Public Schools Reopening Plan](#) that will hopefully lead us to full-time, in-person education when it is deemed safe by our public health officials. We recognize that this will be a long journey. Developing a safe and educationally sound plan for a district of our size has not been an easy undertaking. What works in one district may not work in another. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, we were told we would have a state plan to reopen school, but the [Restart and Recovery Plan: The Road Back](#) received on June 26 only provided a framework leaving specific plans up to each district. Then, on July 24, days before districts were required to submit reopening plans, the governor announced that families would be allowed the option to choose all-remote instruction, as outlined in the memo titled [Clarifying Expectations Regarding Fulltime Remote Learning Options for Families in 2020-2021](#).

After districts had submitted their reopening plans to the Bergen County Executive Superintendent of Schools that detailed how we would meet a list of health and safety standards, the governor signed [Executive Order 175](#) on August 13, granting permission for districts to reopen via remote-only instruction if they cannot adequately meet critical health and safety protocols outlined in the school reopening guidance. Districts reopening via remote-only instruction would need a plan that details the steps they will take to meet the standards and when they will return to in-person learning, which is still the Governor's mandate for all schools. We are awaiting the criteria needed to determine if we should not return to in-person instruction and go fully-remote.

I have been asked why the Ridgewood Public Schools did not have all-remote instruction listed as an option for parents when we sent our district survey. Simply, all remote was not an option at that time. I have been asked if all remote instruction is an option for the district at this time. The answer is that I really don't know because all districts are waiting on a new health and safety checklist. When it is received, I will work with our administrators, the Board of Education, and our legal counsel to review it. We will continue to provide information as it becomes available. These constant changes in guidance and mandates from the State of New Jersey, in addition to the news reports of unsuccessful school openings in other areas of the country, have caused increased anxiety concerning opening schools in our own state. Our primary goal for our students and employees is the safe reopening of our schools as detailed in our reopening plan. We want our students and staff back in our classrooms teaching and learning. To view the most recent COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments and K-12 Schools concerning contact tracing, please click [here](#).

Our principals expect to finalize our schedules during the week of August 24. I know this is late, but the numerous changes have impacted the work they have done and now need to redo. Parents should expect teacher and class assignments to change, and given the option for parents to transition between instructional models, parents should also expect that some staffing assignments may shift over the course of the fall as well. I continue to ask for your patience and understanding. I know that we all want what is best for our students and educators to keep our community safe and strong, and I am confident that we can work through the challenges and obstacles that are confronting us.



To limit the number of email communications, I ask that parents and guardians read the important information below regarding the Mandatory Annual Student Information Update.

### **Mandatory Annual Student Information Update**

A postcard was mailed to your home, notifying you that the Mandatory Annual Student Information Update process through Skyward opened on Friday, August 14. This process will ensure that we have the most up-to-date information for you and your children in Skyward, and it must be completed before school begins on Wednesday, September 2.

Skyward Family Access is the district's primary mode of communication with parents. Please note the following:

- It is vital that we have current email addresses and phone numbers in Skyward. If this information changes at any point during the year, please be sure to update Skyward to ensure that you receive critical school communications.
- All emergency contacts identified in Skyward must be local and able to pick up your child from school as soon as possible.
- In addition to the Acceptable Use Policy, parents will be asked to complete the Remote Video Conferencing Consent form for your child to participate in online virtual settings for educational purposes.
- One of the steps in the Annual Student Information Update is to indicate whether or not you grant media permission for your child. Last spring, when we transitioned to remote learning, we experienced an increase in media sharing as a means to keep the community connected and informed about the exciting things that were happening around the district. Please be sure to read through this step carefully. The default response is NO; therefore, if you wish to grant media permission for your child, you must select YES.

The Mandatory Annual Student Information Update must be completed in order for your child to have access to the district's network and resources. Directions can be found [here](#). If you require assistance with Skyward Family Access, please contact [skywardhelp@ridgewood.k12.nj.us](mailto:skywardhelp@ridgewood.k12.nj.us).

Please continue to wear masks and practice social distancing to ensure a safe reopening.

Sincerely,



Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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