



## SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS

### Office of the Superintendent

*Michael LaSusa*

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**259 Lafayette Avenue, Chatham, NJ 07928**

**(973) 457-2501**

May 7, 2021

Dear Parent,

I am writing to update you on the next steps toward returning more students to daily in-person instruction. Fortunately, our [regional COVID numbers](#) have continued to improve, meaning that we can maintain three feet of spacing in our classrooms, and our local cases have also slowed. Based on those factors, and some of the details following the bullets below, we will implement the following changes in the coming days:

- On Tuesday, May 11, all 12th grade students who currently attend school in person will return to school every day and we will discontinue the A/B cohorts in this grade level. We are starting with 12th grade because:
  - More than 100 of our seniors are partially or fully vaccinated, and another 45 we know of have previously been infected and recovered from COVID; therefore, there will be far fewer students to quarantine in this cohort if there is a positive case in a classroom.
  - Our Senior Internship Program begins on May 17, with upwards of 150 seniors participating and no longer reporting to school as of that date.
  
- On Thursday, May 13, all 9th grade students who currently attend school in person will return to school every day and we will discontinue the A/B cohorts in this grade level. We are moving next to this grade level because:
  - We have had only three positive cases in 9th grade in the past 30 days, which is the fewest of any class in the high school.
  - The 9th grade class is the only one in the school that has not yet been together in the high school as a full class.
  
- On Monday, May 17, all 10th and 11th grade students who currently attend school in person will return to school every day and we will discontinue the A/B cohorts in those grades. Both of these classes also continue to be vaccinated at a steady clip, though they are a bit behind the 12th graders. A few extra days will translate into more vaccination, thus reducing some of the quarantine risk.

As I have mentioned before, bringing all students into school is a risk with respect to the quarantine rules that we still must follow. If or when we have a positive case, we must identify close contacts, defined as any individual who has spent a total of 15 minutes within six feet of an infected person during the infectious period. While we recognize this is a risk, the risk has been reduced through the number of vaccinated students (who do not need to quarantine) and the lower transmission rates. In addition, I feel strongly that bringing all students back to school every day now is preferable to waiting until the fall, and will enable us to transition those students who may be anxious or uneasy now so that those emotions do not build over the next four months. Taking this step now will lead to a smoother start to next school year for a greater number of students.

The next step toward normal school will be the return to full days of school. With well over 90% of our students now attending school in person, it is unlikely that we will be able to take this final step until there is some relaxation of distancing requirements (currently 6 feet when students are unmasked while eating). As we now have only 27 days of school remaining this year, we are focusing on the fall for this final step. Notwithstanding this fact, however, it is exciting to finish the final month of the year with all students attending school every day. Thank you again for your ongoing patience and understanding.

And HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Sincerely,

*Michael LaSusa*

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