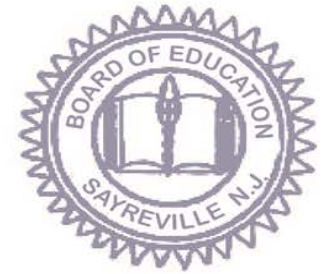




***Sayreville Public Schools***  
***Vision 2030***

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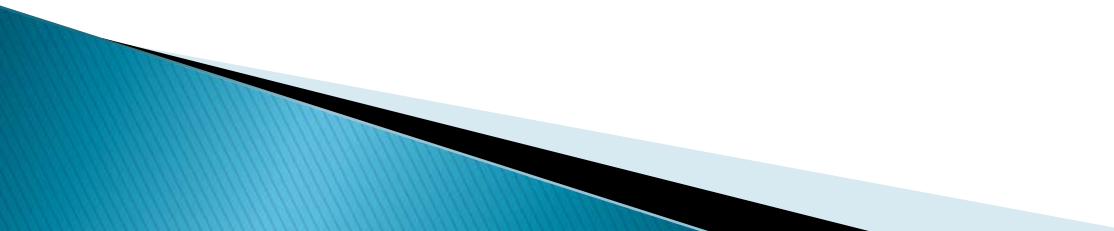
# Sayreville Public Schools

## Restart of School Plan BOE Meeting Presentation

**Presented by: Dr. Richard Labbe, Superintendent of Schools**  
**on**  
**Tuesday, August 25, 2020**

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# Timeline

- ▶ On June 24, 2020, Governor Murphy announced that absent any changes in public health data in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Jersey Public Schools will be allowed to reopen for in-person instruction in September 2020
  - ▶ Shortly after that, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) required that all school districts develop a Restart of School plan that must include in-person instruction and released guidance for doing so in a 104-page document entitled: The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education.
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- ▶ On July 21, 2020, Governor Murphy clarified the ambiguous language in the Road Back manual pertaining to the option for parents/guardians to elect for their child(ren) to participate in fulltime virtual instruction rather than in the in-person instructional plans developed and outlined in each individual school district's Restart Plan.
- ▶ On July 24, 2020, the NJDOE released clarifying guidance pertaining to this in an addendum to the Road Back entitled: Clarifying Expectations Regarding Fulltime Remote Learning Options for Families in 2020-21.
- ▶ Along with this information, school districts also learned from their county DOE offices that preliminary approval of Restart Plans by the executive county superintendent was required before being allowed to share it with their community and that such would be contingent upon the plan meeting the expectation outlined in a checklist that was currently being developed by the NJDOE.

- ▶ The plan was developed collaboratively by the Sayreville Pandemic Response Team in conjunction with the feedback provided by the SAA, SEA, and the Sayreville BOE, along with the survey response data submitted by stakeholders in the community and collected from July 10, 2020 – July 29, 2020.
- ▶ The plan was reviewed and revised one last time by the Pandemic Response Team on July 29, 2020 before being submitted to the NJDOE and Sayreville BOE for preliminary approval on July 30, 2020.
- ▶ On August 7, 2020 our plan was presented to the community without notice of approval from the NJDOE because the guidance in the Road Back said it must be within four weeks of the beginning of the school year.
- ▶ On August 9, 2020 the plan was approved by the county DOE office.

- ▶ On August 12, 2020, Governor Murphy and the NJDOE Commissioner of Education announced that school districts could resubmit their Restart of School Plans and begin the school year with remote learning for all students for a given period of time if upon resubmission of their plans, they could clearly state in their revised plan the reason for not being able to safely reopen for in-person instruction, and how and when this reason would be remedied.
- ▶ On August 13, 2020 the district Pandemic Response Team met for an emergency meeting to review the district's Restart of School Plan based new NJDOH recommendations, as well as additional information about staff availability that the Sayreville Education Association (SEA) sent to the Sayreville Board of Education and superintendent earlier that day.
- ▶ On August 21, 2020, we resubmitted our plan to the NJDOE and requested that we be permitted to provide fulltime remote learning for all students in the district for the entirety of the first marking period, which ends on November 12, 2020. As previously mentioned, the reason for the resubmission of the plan was that the district would not have enough instructional staff to safely reopen schools for the in-person instruction outlined in this plan.

# Phase 1 or Fulltime Remote Learning for All Students

- ▶ Synchronous (to Early Dismissal Schedule) virtual instruction for all students or those participating in the “fulltime remote learning” option.
- ▶ Students must attend remotely by the exact start time of their scheduled classes in order to be considered present and not tardy (Technical difficulties will be taken into consideration).
- ▶ Buses used for transporting student meals.
- ▶ No in-person assemblies and field trips, but participation in approved athletic and extra-curricular activities, as well as remote clubs and co-curricular activities will be permitted.

# Individual School Restart Plans

- ▶ Principals have also collaboratively developed individual School Restart Plans.
  - The plans will address many of the finer details necessary for the implementation of the district Restart of School Plan at each respective school in the district and in each Phase of the plan.
  - For the sake of our new plan to begin instruction in Phase 1 or remote learning for all students, a major component of these plans will address the procedures that will be used for students and/or parents to pick-up technology devices, as well as necessary curriculum resources, such as textbooks, workbooks, independent and guided reading material, etc.

# Answers to NEW Frequently Asked Questions

- ▶ What remote learning video platform will be used? WebEx, Google Hangout, Zoom, other?
  - Teachers will use either the Google Classroom or Oncourse Classroom learning management platforms.
  - Teachers will use either WebEx or Google Meet to deliver the required live interactive instruction.
- ▶ Will all teachers use the same video platform or is it up to their personal preference?
  - It is their preference between the options previously noted.



- ▶ Video platforms offer great collaboration tools like breakout rooms, multi-sharing, polling, and group chats. Have the teachers been trained on how to use these tools? If not, when will they be trained?
  - Yes, teachers have been provided with multiple training opportunities via paid summer workshops and archived videos. They will also receive training on September 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- ▶ Is there a list of approved free tools the teachers can use? For instance, <https://quizizz.com/> was used for timed quizzes. In another case, this website <https://www.positivephysics.org/> was used, students were directed to watch videos and assessments were given through the platform. Are there tools teachers are prohibited from using?
  - Yes, teachers will only be permitted to use approved resources and will have to follow specific request procedures to use new resources.
- ▶ Timed tests always raise a student's anxiety level. Is it acceptable for teachers to give timed tests? If yes, what is a reasonable time per question? In my opinion, 20 seconds per question for materials that are self-taught is unreasonable. At least one teacher was using this tactic in the spring. What is the guidance on testing given by the administration?
  - Teachers will be permitted to use timed tests in the same manner in which they would during in-person instruction, which is usually for the duration of the period. Students with "extended time" modifications in their IEPs or 504 assistance plans will be allowed additional time to finish assessments in accordance with them. No timed question tests will be permitted.

- ▶ Optimum, the internet provider for the majority of Sayreville residents is unreliable. Are there any conversations happening with Optimum about this situation and their infrastructure to support remote learning?
  - Yes, we have made attempts. However, the school district operates on Altice, which is the business side of Optimum and we have not generally experienced any problems. Optimum of a form of utility service, the district has no say on what utilities are offered within Sayreville, however the town council would have some decision making power on this front. The district would recommend that anyone that is experiencing a problem with their home internet provider reach out to the provider and express their dissatisfaction and request a resolution. Often problems can be resolved on a case by case basis.
- ▶ What happens when there is an outage or a technology issue and the student can't get online? Will they be marked absent?
  - Teachers will be instructed to be flexible and considerate to students who state that they were unable to logon on time for a class or at all due to technical difficulties and therefore will exercise their professional judgement before marking such students as being tardy or absent. However, patterns of this will be investigated and mitigated according to findings. Parents can appeal all absences and lates to their child's principal.

- ▶ Are students required to be “on camera” during remote learning?
  - Students are required to be logged on but do not have to be on camera.
- ▶ How will attendance be taken?
  - The teacher will either perform a roll call or use the information provided by the software to determine who is logged on and present.
- ▶ How will the schedules work? Will each remote class be 40 minutes, and students attend one after another? Will the students get short breaks between classes?
  - Students will follow their school’s Early Dismissal Schedule which indicate the specific times per period. This will include passing times so that students and staff can take short breaks. Schedules in preschool–5<sup>th</sup> grade will be blocked and provide for breaks. Schedules will be shared by teachers and principals.

- ▶ Will there be homework and other additional assignments given on top of the virtual learning session? Or will time be built into each class for active learning and reinforcement of the materials?
  - Yes, there will be homework and additional assignments given. Instructional periods will consist primarily of direct instruction. Students will have the remainder of their abbreviated day to complete assignments and will be encouraged to take advantage of teacher office hours at the end of each academic day to get extra help or clarification on content and assignments.
- ▶ Block scheduling allows students to have more time for reflection and less information to process over the course of a school day. Did the Board of Ed & Administration consider an A/B block schedule? If not, why?
  - We pursued this several years ago but did not implement it because our BOE and instructional staff at the time were not agreeable to proceeding with it.

- ▶ Zoom fatigue is real and video sessions in succession are exhausting (see article <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200421-why-zoom-video-chats-are-so-exhausting>) What is the plan to avoid video participation fatigue?
  - This is the purpose for the Early Dismissal Schedule with shorter class periods, passing time between classes, and lunch, as well as teacher office hours offered for students to participate in on a voluntary basis.
- ▶ How will the grading system work? What is the weighting for classwork, quizzes and tests? What about video participation?
  - Student assessment will not be modified. Classwork, homework, and tests/quizzes/projects will be weighted the same as they are during normal in-person instruction in accordance with BOE policy. As mentioned previously, students will be required to logon to their scheduled classes at the time indicated on their schedule during an Early Dismissal Day.
- ▶ Will students have “Flex Fridays” to catch up on all the self-guided learning that takes place with remote learning?
  - No

- ▶ When will senior pictures be taken?
  - Senior pictures will be taken between November and December of this year according to our photographer. The vendor has been closed for several months and they are now catching up. More information will be forthcoming from the high school.
- ▶ What are the plans for making the senior year as normal as possible (homecoming, senior prom, senior BBQ, etc..)
  - With the exception of Homecoming, which is still up in the air, we are hopeful that we can hold all these.
- ▶ How will honor society members be inducted? Inductions did not happen in the spring, for instance the math honor society. Will this induction take place in the fall?
  - National Honor Society inductions will be in the Spring. Math Honor Society induction will take place in the fall remotely or in-person. More information will be forthcoming.
- ▶ Is the junior prom being rescheduled to the fall for the students that are now seniors?
  - The Junior Prom is scheduled for the fall on November 10<sup>th</sup> at Battleground Country Club. However they are dependent upon indoor dining restriction. If they are still in place at that time, it will either be cancelled or rescheduled.


- ▶ Parents want to get to know the teachers because after all, learning is a partnership between the teacher, student and parent. How will “back to school night” work in a remote setting?
  - Teachers will post videos and invite parents to email or call them with questions or concerns.
- ▶ How and when will teachers be available to speak with the parents when there are challenges with online learning? What is the service level agreement between parents & teachers, meaning if I email a teacher, when should I expect to get a response? 12 hours? 24 hours? 36 hours? Should the parent expect an email, phone call or video chat?
  - We ask that all our teachers respond to parent inquiries in a timely manner via either an email response or phone call. If parents and teachers also agree to speak via WebEx or Google Meet, that is acceptable too. Parents who do not receive a timely response should contact their child’s principal.

- ▶ Will teachers have “office hours” when students can meet with them one-to-one for help? And can students meet with the teacher one-on-one in person at school at a safe social distance and with a mask on? If they can’t meet with the teachers face-to-face, one-on-one, why not?
  - Yes, teachers will be required to provide live office hours via WebEx or Google Meet for the last hour of the normal academic day. See the times below. Yes, students and teachers can meet and speak one to one or face to face in a Google Meet or WebEx breakout room.
    - Preschool– 3 Schools – 2:20 – 3:20 pm
    - Samsel Upper Elementary School (Grades 4–5) – 1:45 – 2:45 pm
    - Sayreville Middle School – 1:45 – 2:45 pm.
    - Sayreville War Memorial High School – 1:17 – 2:12 pm
- ▶ Can you provide insight on the negotiations and/or concessions made with the Sayreville Education Association union? What are the conditions for in-person learning to happen after Nov 12?
  - We are not permitted to discuss matters pertaining to personnel and/or labor negotiations in public. We will reexamine reopening for in-person instruction at the end of October. At that time we will utilize current COVID-19 NJDOH data as well as feedback from staff and their private physicians to determine whether we can safely reopen for in-person instruction.



- ▶ Was the Nov 12 date used because teachers are taking advantage of the Family First Coronavirus Response Act, taking up to 12 weeks of leave.”
  - The factors considered to make this decision were based on information provided by staff who were unable to participate in in-person instruction and documented by their physician, the duration of the maximum FFCARES LOA, indoor dining restrictions, and consistency with grading and assessment. However, as per EO 175, schools are were recently made exempt from indoor dining for the purpose of operating the school day but that would not include extracurricular activities like a prom.
- ▶ Will the teachers broadcast from their classrooms or will they be teaching/broadcasting from home?
  - Although we are asking and strongly encouraging our teachers to do so, it will not be required.
- ▶ Is it mandatory for teachers to conduct a live video session everyday and teach the course material? Or can teachers direct students to watch videos and complete worksheets?
  - Yes, teachers, therapists, and counselors will be required to leverage WebEx or Google Meet to teach live lessons/therapy/counseling every day except when they are absent. When a teacher is absent, he or she will give notice of this and post assignments with electronic instructional aides such as PPT slides and videos.

- ▶ What is an acceptable use of pre-recorded videos? Can teachers direct students to watch YouTube or Khan Academy? Does assigning a student to watch a video qualify as “teaching”?
  - As part of their direct live instruction, teachers can show a brief video as they normally would during in-person instruction. The emphasis during the live instruction will be on communication and collaboration between the teacher and students and among the students. However, unless assigned for homework or provided as an additional resource for student to use to complete assignments, the only time viewing a video should be assigned is when a teacher is absent that day.
- ▶ If teachers do rely on pre-recording videos, what is an acceptable length? (NOTE: Research suggests that 6 minutes is the optimal length for instructional videos. After 6 minutes engagement drops rapidly.)
  - This would be dependent upon the instructional purpose of the video and in accordance with the duration of time students would normally watch a video during in-person instruction. For instance, a decision would be made by the teacher based upon the length of the direct instructional period. As mentioned previously, video viewing can also be assigned for homework or for students to use as a resource for an assignment.

- ▶ Without the restrictions of a physical classroom, are the size of classes being increased. For instance, one teacher can broadcast to 100 students at the same time. Can't a percentage of the teachers be furloughed until their services are needed for in-person instruction?
    - Class sizes for remote learning will be the normal size of a classroom (i.e. approximately 20–25 students per class).
    - With regard to furloughing employees, we are not permitted to discuss matters pertaining to personnel or labor negotiations in public. However, if we were to do so, we would not have enough staff to reduce capacity in classrooms as stipulated in Phase 2a and b, and as recommended by the Road Back and NJDOH guidelines.
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- ▶ If indoor dining and other restrictions are lifted prior to Nov 12 will students return to in-person learning? If not, why must we all wait until Nov 12?
  - As noted previously, along with indoor dining restrictions, the factors that will be considered when making a determination on reopening our schools for in-person instruction after November 12<sup>th</sup>, will be based on information provided by staff who were unable to participate in in-person instruction and documented by their physician, the duration of the maximum FFCARES LOA, and consistency with grading and assessment.
- ▶ Why is it safe to have students in the schools for paid childcare but it is unsafe for “teachers to teach in a classroom?”
  - We are not reopening our schools for in-person instruction because we do not have enough instructional staff who are able to perform it. Leading Edge and some private preschools have the required amount of staff to do so.
- ▶ When problems arise, who do parents go to for solutions? And if issues aren't being resolved, what is the escalation scale? For example: Teacher>Dept Supervisor>Principal> Asst Super>Super>BOE?
  - As always, when problems arise we expect our staff and parents to collaborate in finding an amicable solution. However, in the case that such is not possible, we then expect our parents to contact their child’s principal, who will then mediate a solution with the assistance of the appropriate department supervisor. If an agreeable resolution can still not be reached, we encourage parents to contact an Assistant Superintendent or the Director of Special Services, if it is a student with a disability matter, and/or the Superintendent. Since BOE member are elected officials, parents may select to contact them at any time. However, they may prefer you to exhaust all district employee resources first.

# Resources

- ▶ Go to the Restart of Schools Website at [http://sayrevillek12.net/district/pandemic\\_plan/restart\\_of\\_school](http://sayrevillek12.net/district/pandemic_plan/restart_of_school) to read the following documents and other resources.
  - Sayreville Restart of School Survey Summary of Responses
  - Sayreville Restart of School Plan PPT Presentation
  - Sayreville Restart of School Plan
  - Sayreville Restart of School Plan FAQs
  - Other district and NJDOE resources