



# Hi

## ***Hello Millbrook Families!***

*We are off to a great beginning of our hybrid learning model! As we grow this model we will continue to assess and refine along the way. Thank you for completing the Daily Health Screener - you all are doing an amazing job - Bravo to YOU! Please remember that meals are free to all students 18 and under who reside within our district borders. If you have questions, contact our Director of Food Services, Holly Heady at (845) 677-4200 x 1137 or [holly.heady@millbrookcsd.org](mailto:holly.heady@millbrookcsd.org). And while we are talking about Food Services, I want to publicly and formally thank and applaud this team for their hard work and dedication to providing healthy meals to students in our community every day of the week. This is an extraordinary feat and makes me even more proud to be a part of this very special, kind, and giving community. As always, we genuinely appreciate your patience and flexibility during these turbulent times.*

***Stay well. Onward!! Laura, Your Proud Superintendent of Schools***

## **Calkins Joins District in Tech-Driven Role**



Kirsten Calkins joined Millbrook this year as an Instructional Technology Specialist, a new position created to

support educators and students with the use of classroom technology.

"My role as an Instructional Technology Specialist is so diverse, that is partly why I love it so much," Calkins said. "My role is one of innovation, training, support, and encouragement."

District staff knew they needed a specialist in educational technology, not just because of the hybrid learning models schools have had to offer, but also because they understand students and staff need access to good training, tools, and instructional opportunities for the technology to be effective.

Calkins said, "Millbrook is very forward-thinking and innovative." She praised the staff for being student-focused and embracing new ideas and programs.

Calkins hopes to create new opportunities for students such as developing an Esports team and providing virtual field trips. She also plans to offer professional development for staff and to collaborate with the community to address online education and safety," she said.

She believes technology should enhance classroom work while developing students' problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and innovative thought processes, which will prepare them for future success.

"Finding what best suits student and educator needs has always been the most important piece of technology implementation," she said. Calkins added, "Many districts introduce technology haphazardly, but it's not about the coolest or newest, it's about finding technology that allows for educational growth."

"This district has an incredibly talented and enthusiastic staff which makes my job so much easier," Calkins said. "I love this Millbrook Strong attitude."

A former French teacher, Calkins saw technology's potential and worked to become Google and International Society for Technology in Education certified which lead her to her current role. "I took a surprising crazy route to get here," Calkins said.

## **District Begins Hybrid Model**



On Tuesday, October 6, 2020, the Millbrook Central School District Board of Education approved a hybrid learning model (a combination of in-person and remote learning) with an implementation date of November 2. Families completed a mandatory survey by October 13 to provide information about how they would like their child(ren) to return to school. The District offered families two choices for learning: hybrid (AARBB) or fully remote.

The hybrid learning model includes 2 days of in-person learning and 3 days of virtual learning. Students who are fully remote receive 100% of instruction virtually. Whether it is a fully remote student or a hybrid student both models require students to follow a set daily schedule and participate in both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Regardless of the model chosen by families, Wednesdays are remote for most students.

Families were asked to fully commit to the learning model they chose until January 29, 2021, and will subsequently be asked which model they prefer for the third quarter of the school year.

The Millbrook Central School District is proud to report that it successfully launched phase one of its hybrid (AARBB) learning model. Last week the District welcomed the Blue Cohort (AA) - Grades K,1,3,6,9 & 12 last Monday and Tuesday, the Gray Cohort (BB) - Grades K,1,3,6,9 & 12 and the Blazer Cohort - Grades K,1,3,6-12 all five days. Students were excitedly greeted upon arrival by Building and District Leadership and multiple staff members.

For the in-person learners, time is being spent on learning new safety and health procedures and getting to know each other and their teachers. We look forward to phase two - TODAY!! - when the rest of the grades join us in-person making us a full hybrid model.



Superintendent Laura thanks everyone for their understanding and patience as she and the Millbrook CSD staff continue to create a safe environment focusing on health, wellness, education, and youth development. "These are not easy decisions to make, but please know that we made them with the best interest of all of our students, teachers, staff, and parents in mind. COVID-19 brought challenges, but it didn't stop us because we are #MillbrookStrong!" she said.



# MILLBROOK EMBRACES *NEW TECHNOLOGY*

Millbrook CSD, like all school districts, has had to adjust to new learning practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, which involves students using new technology.

"This year, the District introduced its formal 1-to-1 Chromebook program for Millbrook Middle School and gave students, from all grade levels, personally assigned Chromebooks," said Elliot Garcia, Director of Technology and Data Service. Prior to this school year only the Millbrook High School had a 1-to-1 Chromebook program.

"The District needed to double its bandwidth capacity and is currently upgrading the firewall and wireless infrastructure at Elm Drive Elementary School to support the online instruction and increased computer use," Garcia said.

"All of our planning is being done to sustain this model as long as is necessary," Garcia said.



"The District's primary instructional platform is Google Classroom and Kindergarten students use Seesaw, a platform specifically geared toward younger children," Garcia said. He added the District is upgrading to Google Enterprise for Education, which will allow staff to use premium features on that platform.

"Additionally we have been exploring other instructional software packages to support remote and hybrid instruction with recommendations and requests coming from our teachers," he said. "We also have the vast majority of the software packages used last year that are still available for use."

Garcia and his staff prepared for the November 2 start of the District's hybrid-learning model since May including acquiring additional computing devices for students and staff.

"We've been working hard to make sure we had enough devices for all students and staff and bolstered our network infrastructure to support all of them," Garcia said.

Garcia and his staff purchased 185 Chromebooks for the current school year. "They were originally meant to replace other devices, but plans changed once the COVID-19 pandemic struck," Garcia said.

"We made the decision to retain all devices previously intended to be excessed or replaced in order to have enough to cover every grade level," Garcia said.

During the spring, middle school students were assigned Chromebooks for daily use, but the computers were kept at school and stored in carts at the end of each school day, Garcia said. "Now students have the Chromebooks with them at all times, whether for in-person education or at home."

"Those in live attendance will take them home every day that they're here," Garcia said.

"In the pre-COVID 19 world, technology enhanced and supported learning, but has since become the primary method of instruction for students," Garcia said. He hopes some of the positive techniques and tools implemented during this time will enhance instructional practices in the future even when the District returns to full in-person classes.

"A big part of our process has been to provide all teachers and learners with the tools and resources they need to improve their technological proficiency in order to thrive in the current environment," Garcia said.



## *Parent-Teacher Conferences*

Parent-Teacher Conferences will take place remotely on **Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>**. Meeting times will be offered during the day and evening on that Wednesday.

Wednesday November 18 <sup>th</sup> : Parent -Teacher Conferences	
<b>All Schools - Daytime Meetings:</b> <b>8:45am - 2:45pm</b>	<b>Elm/Alden - Evening Meetings:</b> <b>6:00pm - 8:00pm</b> <b>MS/HS - Evening Meetings:</b> <b>7:00pm - 9:00pm</b>

All students will be **remote** on this day, Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. They will remotely join classroom morning meetings/homeroom-base so that teachers can take attendance and then students will have independent, asynchronous work to complete.

The day after Parent-Teacher conferences is Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. That will be a regular hybrid school day with our Gray Cohort & Blazer Cohort attending in-person instruction and our Blue Cohort attending classes remotely. It will also be a Day 5 in the six-day cycle.

