



HADDON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

Broadcast

Dear Haddon Township School District Community,

Welcome back to another exciting school year. As we open another year together, I would like to share key updates and reflections that will help us start with clarity, focus, and strength.

Staff Convocation & First Day of School

Tomorrow morning, Tuesday, September 2, all teachers and professionally certified staff will convene at **8:00 AM** in the high school cafeteria. This is always a special moment, a time to gather as one team, to reconnect, and to set the tone for the year ahead. Complimentary light refreshments will be served courtesy of Lincoln Investments. **The first day of school for students will be Thursday, September 4, which will be a half day of instruction.**

Bond Construction Projects

When you step back into our middle and high schools, you will notice immediately that these are not the same buildings you left in June. Major areas are undergoing heavy demolition as part of Phase 2, and this work will continue until January. These zones remain active construction sites and are fully sectioned off for safety.

At the middle school, especially, final classroom preparations will continue tomorrow, and some staff may have less set-up time than usual. Still, we are on track to welcome students on Thursday. The reality is that transformation is never easy. **Change is difficult at the beginning and messy in the middle, but it is also the only path to the kind of beautiful results that can last for decades to come.**

Cell Phone Policy

This year, we are moving with purpose to create healthier, more focused learning environments. **For students in grades 8–12, cell phones will not be permitted in classrooms or study halls.** They must either be checked into lockers at the start of the day or placed in classroom caddies. Across our region, state, and nation, more districts are adopting similar or more restrictive policies to address the fragmented attention and distraction that these devices bring.

Many of the questions I've received center on school safety. After consulting with the Haddon Township Police Department, I can share confidently that in the event of an evacuation, it is actually safer for students not to have electronic devices. Please review the official statement from HTPD below:

"Your new policies do not compromise safety; rather, they enhance it. From a law enforcement perspective, limiting student cell phone access during the school day strengthens both overall safety and emergency response. In a critical incident, widespread student phone use can overwhelm 911 systems and local networks, delay emergency communications, and spread unverified or alarming information on social media. Active phone use also poses direct risks since audible rings or vibrations can reveal hiding students, and attempts to film or communicate movements may unintentionally compromise law enforcement tactics. Most importantly, when students focus on their phones instead of staff direction, their attention is divided at the very moment when silence, stillness, and compliance with safety protocols are most critical."

For grades K–7, our strong recommendation remains not to send smartphones at all. If parents choose otherwise, they must remain powered off and put away until dismissal.

District Goals for 2025–2026

The Board of Education has approved district goals that reflect both our values and our ambitions:

- 1) Deliver safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environments that minimize distraction and foster focus, creativity, and mastery.
- 2) Integrate high-quality resources and programs to enrich student experiences.
- 3) Promote cycles of collaboration, reflection, and action across classrooms, schools, and the district to drive continuous improvement.

These goals are not just words on paper. They are commitments to our children and our community.

Student Placement & Registration

I would also like to address the process for kindergarten and new student registration. This year, we were not able to honor every family's preference for a specific school or teacher. Please know that each placement decision was guided by three priorities:

1. Maintaining class size caps across all five elementary schools
2. Ensuring equitable student-to-teacher ratios
3. Keeping siblings together whenever possible

In some cases, this has meant a child is not placed in the school geographically closest to their home. However, every student has either safe walking access or bus transportation. Looking ahead, I will recommend that the Board review our dotted and solid boundary lines as well as enrollment trends to ensure continued balance. Our intent will always be to avoid unnecessary disruption while planning responsibly for the future.

Opening Day Thoughts

As we begin this journey, let us remember: schools are not simply buildings, schedules, or policies; they are living communities. They are places where resilience is built, where creativity is sparked, and where mastery is earned. The road ahead may challenge us, but challenges are what forge growth. Just as iron sharpens iron, our students, our staff, and our families will sharpen one another. Our purpose, our commitment, and our belief in the potential of every child is what will guide us through uncertainty and toward excellence. Let us meet this year with open minds, steady hearts, and an unshakable belief that the best is yet to come.

-Sincerely,

Robert J. Fisicaro, Ed. D. Superintendent