

January 9, 2021

Dear Garden City School Community,

As we concluded our first week of school in the New Year, I want to start by thanking you for your continued cooperation and partnership. This has been a difficult week for several reasons, most notably what occurred in our nation's capital this past week. As an educator and parent myself, I understand that our children may be scared or confused over what took place. Many of our teachers provided context for our students to comprehend the events of the day and taught them about democracy, especially at the secondary level. As educators, we take these teachable moments where we help shape our children's thinking on humanity. We will continue to emphasize with our students that we must demonstrate our respect and support for one another, even in the face of differences.

On Monday, Jan. 11, we look forward to welcoming our senior class back to hybrid instruction following a week of virtual learning. As we work with the Nassau County Department of Health to conduct contact tracing of new cases, please continue to be vigilant in following all COVID-19 safety protocols.

As of today, we have 48 positive active student cases and a total of 134 students who are currently quarantined. We also have 6 positive active staff cases with a total of 18 staff members quarantined. Since yesterday we had 4 positive student cases and 3 positive staff cases. We need to continue to adhere to the safety protocols, so that our students and staff are safe and our schools continue to remain open.

We are monitoring the rise in cases within our [school district](#) and [greater community](#). With that said, our district's phased-in approach for the return to full-time, in-person instruction for our secondary students will be delayed at least until the end of January. As I noted in the [proposal to the Board of Education](#) in early December, a decision on when to begin the phased-in return will be based on the ongoing discussions with the Department of Health and on our school and community's infection rate. I understand this decision will be disappointing and frustrating for some; however, we must move forward in a thoughtful, deliberative way that prioritizes the health and safety of our students and staff.

With the vaccine now in distribution, the remainder of the year holds great promise for our schools. [Phase 1B of the vaccine distribution](#) starts on Monday, which includes teachers and education workers. As we learn more about the vaccination distribution, we will share the information with you.

Finally, I'd like to alert you to some administrative changes in our district. Locust School Principal Dr. Jean Ricotta has announced that she will be leaving our district as of Feb. 21, 2021, to move out of state. We thank Dr. Ricotta for her 13 years of service to the Garden City School District and wish her well in her next chapter. In the coming weeks, I anticipate announcing a plan for an interim principal to serve for the remainder of the school year, which will allow us the time to conduct a thorough search for a new principal to lead Locust School into the future.

The district is also in the search process for a principal of Garden City Middle School (as you may know, Dr. Eric Nezowitz has served as interim principal since last year), as well as a new high school assistant principal to fill the position currently occupied by Assistant Principal Mr. Martin Malone for the past two years. We have begun the search process and we will keep you informed.

Have a safe and wonderful weekend.

Sincerely,

*Kusum*

Kusum Sinha, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools