

January 23, 2021

Dear Garden City School Community,

At the Board of Education meeting held this past Wednesday, I shared an update regarding our phased-in approach to opening our secondary buildings to students full time. As you know, our initial schedule was delayed due to the rise in COVID-19 cases throughout our school district. Since that time, we have begun to see a small decline in positive cases in our schools. I am hopeful that the “holiday surge” is behind us and that our numbers will continue to decrease.

Since the beginning of the school year, I have repeatedly said that the health and safety of our students and staff is paramount and that any decision concerning a return to full-time, in-person instruction for our secondary students would be guided by this principle. Through our partnership with the Nassau County Department of Health, we follow our data closely, and it appears that our schools have not been a source of transmission for COVID-19 so far. At this time, in consultation with the Department of Health, we have decided to cautiously proceed with a staggered return for our secondary students, in line with the [goals that we discussed in December](#).

As of now, it is our plan to invite all 6th and 12th grade students back full time on February 1. This return, however, is dependent upon the number of positive cases decreasing in both schools and the larger community. We will monitor cases closely. We will also assess any logistical challenges on a daily basis. If the data remains the same or we see a downward trend, then we will invite back the next group of students. Our tentative timeframe for other grades is:

- Feb. 24th - grades 8 and 11
- March 8th - grades 7, 9 and 10

We will closely monitor the cases following February break; should we see an increase, we may have to adjust the phased in schedule once again. It is important to note that our custodial staff is in the process of installing desk shields in all grades 6-12 classrooms in preparation for our students’ return. Mr. Steingruebner and Dr. Nezowitz have sent a questionnaire for school attendance options to parents of 6th and 12th grade students. Please answer the questionnaire with your child.

To reiterate, our primary concern and focus is ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff. To this end, we must proceed carefully and understand that this plan may change. I recognize that this uncertainty might be challenging for families, especially for our students. As a community, it will be critical for all of us to adhere to the DOH guidelines. In order for this plan to work, we need each member of our school community to take all necessary precautions, including adhering to guidelines for social gatherings, so that our students can safely return to school.

I realize that members of our school community have differing opinions on the return for our secondary students. I am asking that we continue to work together on behalf of our students, as I know we all share the common goal of providing the best education possible for our children, while keeping them safe and healthy.

Enjoy your weekend and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Kusum

Kusum Sinha, Ed.D.