

Monmouth County Vocational School District

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March 3, 2021

Re: Updates on Our Programs

Dear MCVSD Parents & Families,

As we approach the end of the third marking period, we want to share an update on our progress to date as well as our plans for the remainder of this school year. You can help our process by completing our reopening survey by **Wednesday, March 10: [MCVSD Family Survey](#)**.

Shared Values

Since the summer, our decision-making has been governed by three key values. First, we can all agree that students do best when they can be in-person, at school in a healthy and safe environment. While families need to make decisions that support the health of their students and their loved ones, we must provide as much safe access as possible for those that want it.

Second, it has been our priority to run a 7-hour school day. For our full-time programs, this allows us to maximize the time students have in class when they are in-person. For our shared-time programs, this enables us to accommodate our morning and afternoon sessions.

Finally, we have over 30 different programs at 15 locations throughout Monmouth County. In making any decisions, we are mindful of how our choices can affect groups differently, and we seek to maintain equity between different schools. While we always empower building leaders to make the best decision possible for their students, there are some items that require broader consistency.

COVID-Infection Tracking

Five months of in-person instruction with nearly 2,000 students have provided us with a wealth of data to guide our health and safety decision-making. After consulting with our district head nurse, we can share the following results:

- When following the appropriate protocols, we have no evidence of in-school transmission of COVID-19 between students, staff, or visitors;
- We have no evidence of any COVID-19 transmission through a ventilation system or common touch-point;
- Despite peak community infection rates in January 2021, we experienced limited disruption to school operations;

- Our students, staff, and families have continued to regularly share information about COVID-19 infections, exposure, and quarantine status.

While we do not want to diminish the suffering that this virus has caused or the losses some communities have experienced, our schools have consistently remained safe and healthy learning environments. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently outlined, this is because of the success of our multiple mitigation measures, including universal masking, social distancing, universal health screening, and enhanced hygiene. We want to thank you for doing your part in supporting our initiative.

Social & Emotional Learning

The global pandemic has had a serious impact on students' behavioral and emotional health. The feelings of isolation and uncertainty have compounded everyday stress and anxiety. Cut off from the positive connections students typically experience from school, students are left without effective coping mechanisms.

To address this concern, we have expanded access to our school psychologist and student assistance counselor. We have also encouraged our schools to organize programs to support students' social and emotional learning as well as emphasize the feeling of community during a difficult time. However, this is not a substitute for feeling that life has returned to "normal." As we continue to discuss how to best support our students, their physical and mental health are always a priority.

Expanding In-Person Access

While we understand the request that some families have made to return to five-day-a-week in-person instruction, there are space limitations that prevent that from happening at this moment. However, we are considering several options, including returning to in-person instruction on Wednesdays on an alternating cohort basis.

As we gather more data and our partners at the state and federal levels update their guidance, we are hopeful that we can continue to expand access to our schools for those students and families who want it.

Teacher Vaccinations

Since the first vaccines were approved in December, we have been working with several county agencies to try to get our staff vaccinated as soon as possible. This is a crucial step in returning to a more normal operation, and we hope to share more information soon.

Planning for the Future

As we plan for the remainder of the year, you can help by sharing your perspective on the options to return to school by **Wednesday, March 10** ([MCVSD Family Survey](#)). Your feedback will help us best support our school community.

We appreciate your continued support and understanding in this challenging time.

Best,

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Dr. Charles Ford, Jr.
Superintendent

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Meehan", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr. Sean Meehan
Assistant Superintendent