



April 9, 2021

Dear South Orange & Maplewood School District Community,

Over the past several weeks, we have had ongoing conversations and negotiations about reopening with our various stakeholders. Today, on behalf of the Board, our Administration and our teacher’s union, SOMEA, we are happy to announce that we have reached a resolution that resolves health and safety concerns regarding building ventilation issues that will allow for significantly more instructional spaces to expand the roll out of in-person hybrid instruction for students whose families have opted in over the next few weeks.

Our reopening plans (as also discussed and supported by our local health departments) will begin on **Monday, April 19** as detailed in the chart below. Updates to our reopening plan are guided by the Governor’s recent announcement reducing social distance for elementary grades, while keeping the six-foot social distancing guidelines intact for middle and high school students.

As a reminder: Parents/guardians of incoming “new to hybrid” students, please remember to send your child to school with an appropriate face mask (pack 1- 2 extra face masks for your child), hand sanitizer and a water bottle [Click here to view District requirements for face masks: bit.ly/SOMSDFAQs]

SOMSD Updated Phased-In Reentry Plan for In-Person Hybrid Students

Phase Level	Details	Dates
PHASE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PreK - 2 hybrid students (including new hybrid students) return to schools in the current two-day a week cohort schedules Middle school, 6th grade hybrid students (including new students) return to in-person learning cohort schedules CHS, 9th grade students (including new hybrid students) return to in-person learning cohort schedules Special Services: ELL, multi-subject POR and Self-Contained programs across all grade levels will continue in-person 4 days a week Note: Friday, April 23 will be a District-wide Asynchronous Day Note: Teachers who wish to enter schools during the week of April 12th to prepare for reopening, please contact your Principal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday, April 19 Note: Friday, April 23, District-wide Asynchronous Day (<i>ALL teachers, instructional and support staff members will report to their schools for final preparations for Phase 4</i>) During this time the current six-foot social distancing mitigation strategy will still be in place for PreK - 2 students (<i>this will allow time for new hybrid students to acclimate to mitigation strategies</i>)
PHASE 4	<p>Elementary: Students will now attend school 5 days a week, as per your current school schedules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PreK - 2 hybrid cohorts (A, B and C) will now be combined/consolidated attending school 5 days a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday, April 26 (transition from Phase 3 to 4)

	<p>week. PreK in their current early dismissal schedules; and K-2 in their current 4-hour day schedules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Special Services: ELL, multi-subject POR and Self-Contained programs in grades K-5 will be in school 5 days a week beginning on April 26 in their current 4-hour day schedules ● Virtual Fridays will discontinue ● Students who have opted for virtual/remote instruction will continue to sign-in via Google Meet/CANVAS for virtual instruction ● Snack/lunches will not be served (“grab and go” lunch is available to all students upon dismissal at their respective school) <p>Middle School: <i>Due to social distancing guidelines from NJDOH middle school students will continue to operate in cohort schedules with virtual Fridays in operation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 6th grade hybrid students will continue and 8th grade hybrid students will join and follow cohort schedules and virtual Fridays. Four-hour schedules will be in place. ● Special Services: ELL, multi-subject POR, i-Step and Self-Contained students will continue school 4 days a week <p>CHS: <i>Due to social distancing guidelines from the NJDOH high school students will continue to operate in cohort schedules with virtual Fridays in operation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 9th grade hybrid students will continue and 12th grade students will join and follow cohort schedules and virtual Fridays. Four-hour schedules will still be in place. ● Special Services: ELL, multi-subject POR and Self-Contained students will continue school 4 days a week 	
<p>PHASE 5</p>	<p>The design below represents our goal for the final 8 weeks of the school year. We must note that this design is contingent upon both the continued advice of our local departments’ of health as they monitor community spread of COVID 19 and our continued partnership with SOMEA.</p> <p>Elementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grades 3 - 5 in-person hybrid students will return to schools in one consolidated group (joining the PreK - 2 students) ● Students will attend school in-person 5 days a week, under their current four-hour schedules (there will be no virtual Fridays) ● Students who have opted for virtual/remote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monday, May 3 ● Note: Virtual Friday’s for middle schools and CHS will be revisited for Phase 5 and further information will follow

	<p>instruction will continue to sign-in via Google Meet/CANVAS for virtual instruction</p> <p>Middle Schools & CHS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All remaining secondary grade levels who have opted for in-person hybrid instruction will join their current middle school and high school counterparts (for middle school, 7th graders; for CHS, 10th and 11th graders) • Due to social distancing, cohort schedules will continue as normal 	
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Explanation of Phases & Timeline

The consolidation of cohorts and additional grade levels returning will be a significant adjustment for Phase 3. It marks the return of some of our younger students (PreK - 2) whose families have recently opted in; as well as the return of our older students (8th and 12 graders) who will be transitioning out of their schools and who all have not been in school since March 2020. Our logic for the two-week gap between Phase 4 and Phase 5 students’ return to in-person instruction are two-fold:

1. The gap will help new students transition back to the normalcy of attending school in-person again (while allowing our local Departments of Health time to monitor the possible impact of community spread).
2. It will allow time for staff to be returned to their assigned classroom (due to the recent concerns with SOMEA a subset of teachers were working in different spaces, i.e., 2nd graders in 4th grade rooms), however, with ventilation concerns being addressed, teachers will need to be relocated back to their classrooms to make room for the incoming student population.

COVID-19 Health-Related Rationale for SOMSD Updated Reopening Plan

We have been in discussions with our local health departments as well as District health leads and have updated our reopening plan based not only on state guidelines, but are also factoring and monitoring Essex County and local COVID positivity rates and spread. The NJ Essex County COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) Score is presently “3” which is orange or high, which it has been since November 13, 2020. Since the week of January 22, 2021, when we began the District Dashboard, we’ve had 81 confirmed reported cases that were contracted from community exposures (outside of school). **There is no evidence of SOMSD in-school transmission.**

- Click here [bit.ly/2PM9zGO] to read a more detailed explanation from our health care professionals as well as more information on who should get tested for COVID-19 and the new testing location in Maplewood open from April 5 - 30.

It has been a long road. However, as we begin to see light at the end of this journey, we are extremely happy to have a plan in place that will allow for all of our students/families who have opted-in to hybrid instruction, to attend the last few months of school in-person. We again thank our students/families for their patience, our building administrators, staff and teachers for their hard work over the past-year, as well as our partners SOMEA for helping to move the needle forward to this point.

Additional updates will follow as needed from the District (i.e. regarding YMCA aftercare updates) and forthcoming return to school logistic details will be provided to families by your building principals.

South Orange & Maplewood School District