



2013 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence

Dear ICS Families,

The Re-Opening Task Force and I have been busy in recent weeks developing a plan for re-opening in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education guidelines. One of the first decisions that needed to be made was the optimal school schedule which ensures the health and safety protocol are adhered to while prioritizing the students' educational experience and the students' and teachers' social and emotional well-being.

We have determined that a Hybrid School Day Schedule will best meet the health, academic, and social-emotional needs of our students. We are excited to share that we will be able to accommodate our entire student body (TK – 8th grade) for in-class instruction five days per week, even with social distancing requirements. Most classes will need to be divided into 2 cohorts since about 16 desks can be accommodated in each elementary building classroom. However, our school building and staffing will allow for us to host all students during the same hours, five days per week, a benefit that most local school districts do not have.

We have decided to modify the day, from the usual 7 hours in the building, to 4.5 hours in the building (7:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). When students return home, they will continue learning through virtual instruction, guided by a teacher for an amount of time appropriate to their educational and developmental needs.

This decision was made for several reasons. First, having the building open in the afternoons will allow ample time for the deep cleaning and sanitization needed on a daily basis. Secondly, the teachers will receive little to no prep time during the instructional day due to the need to limit the number of adults interacting with the cohort. The afternoon will allow teachers to continue instruction on a virtual platform and the time needed to collaborate, prepare units, assessments, provide feedback to students, and communicate with parents. Delivering instruction in-person and virtually will be particularly demanding of our teachers this year. While they are up for the challenge, it is essential to provide them with the time to do this work well and to maintain their health and emotional well-being.

This schedule is also responsive to our students' health, educational, and social-emotional needs. Lunch will be served at home since meals for the entire school population present particular health and safety challenges in this environment. This schedule preserves valuable time for daily, direct instruction by teachers in the classroom. However, while we will have plenty of movement breaks within the day, the socially distanced classroom environment will limit the amount of healthy socialization and collaboration the students can engage in. Being able to complete their learning from home in the afternoons will allow students a break from some of the rigidity of the social distance rules and an opportunity to collaborate and work with peers over Zoom. Additionally, the curriculum will be designed so that it can be delivered both in-person and virtually from the first day of school, which will allow us to be very nimble and adjust to increased virtual learning without delay if the state mandates we do so.

We understand that there will be families who are not comfortable returning to the classroom environment. These families will have the option of 100% virtual learning. Virtual delivery details are still being confirmed however the same curriculum will be delivered. Whether you choose the virtual option or in person instruction, I am requesting a commitment for one marking period. Please refer to the one-page document attached to my letter to learn more detailed information on scheduling.

We will provide After Care from 12:30 pm to 5:30 pm for families who work outside of the home with no other options for childcare. We appreciate your support in reserving this service for families who need it to keep the group size small and allow the focus of the afternoon to be on cleaning.

We know you will have many questions and starting this week, I am hosting grade-level Zoom calls to describe the plan in more detail and answer questions. Your child's teacher will be emailing you a Zoom invite and I look forward to meeting with you.

The ICS faculty and I are so eager to be together with your children once again. We are committed to being creative, flexible, and we are working very hard to ensure that this school year is filled with joy and learning for your children.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fortunato and the Re-Opening Task Force Committee