



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
VERNON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O. Box 99/625 Route 517, Vernon, NJ 07462
Phone: 973-764-2900 Fax: 973-764-0033 Web: www.vtsd.com

Karen D'Avino
Superintendent of Schools
kdavino@vtsd.com

August 30, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians and Caregivers of Vernon Students,

Gratefully, the Vernon Township School District is ready to welcome students back to school. I know I speak for the faculty, administration, aides, secretaries, and custodians that we truly miss having your children and their peers in classrooms with us. This summer, many of our students attended summer academic and social programs that were hosted on our school campuses. It was a joy having them in our buildings and we eagerly look forward to students in our classrooms in September.

Opening schools this year still poses challenges for us in regard to navigating through COVID-19, however the restrictions we faced last year have decreased. While there are still requirements for re-opening, we are pleased to get back to consistent live instruction. I wanted to reiterate some important information as we begin the 2021-2022 school year.

- ***Masks are required for all faculty, staff, visitors and students.*** Governor Murphy's Executive Order #251 which was effective in August, mandates mask wearing while indoors in schools. There are a few exceptions:
 - If a person is medically unable to do so or a medical condition is reflected in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
 - When the individual is engaged in an activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument.
 - When the individual is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity or high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain physical distance from other individuals.
- Masks need not be worn outside, at recess, in an outdoor classroom, having lunch outside, snacks outside, or other outdoor activities. Use of outdoor classrooms/tents are highly encouraged for lunches/outdoor learning spaces when possible.
- ***Temperatures will not be taken*** as students arrive at school. All families are expected to ***self-screen*** children prior to beginning the school day. Please keep ill children home. Additional Health Office information is accessible for each school under the school's website.
- VTSD will ***not be using cohorts*** in September, 2021. All students are expected to attend school for full day attendance and instruction.
- ***Physical distancing of 3 feet*** will be maintained where practicable.
- Screens ***will not*** be used to partition students/faculty from one another.
- ***Handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer will be strongly encouraged and embedded into regular practice in our schools.***

- Playgrounds for recess will be open for our students. Children will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before and after using equipment and should maintain physical distance from one another.
- We will continue using Victory sprayers in the evening after students have left in order to disinfect classrooms.
- Windows shall be opened in classrooms (weather permitting) to maximize fresh air flow. School security measures will be addressed or implemented to maintain student and staff safety.
- Each school will maintain a location for isolation and/or quarantine should the need arise.
- Schools will continue their ability to contact trace by utilizing seating charts and other mechanisms developed by teachers and administrators in order to assist the Department of Health in investigating any possible COVID cases.
- ***PLEASE NOTE:*** The State’s Road Forward indicates that masks or barriers do not preclude close contacts. (The definition of a close contact changes depending on CALI index scores for our region) Close contacts will still need to be quarantined for 10 or 14 days (depending on CALI index for the region). ***The only persons who will not need to quarantine will be those who are fully vaccinated.***
- ***There is a heavy emphasis on proper mask wearing in the Road Forward. For those students consistently wearing masks properly and honoring physical distancing, they will not need to quarantine, allowing schools to remain open and learning to commence.***
- ***Remote learning will not be offered during the 2021-2022 school year*** however if a child is quarantined for 10 or 14 days, school work will be provided for them while they are absent.
- All students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations or modifications as it relates to their Individualized Education Plan.
- Case managers and special education personnel will continue to work with families to ensure the needs of our students with disabilities are met.
- We will not be sending home letters each time there is a COVID positive case in our schools. However, if your child is a “close contact”, you will be notified and supported through any quarantine that may occur.

Please note: All school practices and requirements or recommendations are subject to change based on Executive Orders received from Governor Murphy, guidance from the CDC or the New Jersey Department of Health.

The Vernon Township School District is hosting a **COVID Vaccine Clinic** on September 22 from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. at the Plus Building at Vernon Township High School. The Pfizer vaccine is available for all eligible persons (ages 13 and over). There is no cost. For those who are interested, the first vaccine will be administered. On October 13 from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m., the second COVID vaccine will be administered. Flu shots are also available however they are not free to the public but can be charged through your insurance. The vaccine clinic helps our faculty and staff meet the Governor’s mandate from Executive Order #253 which requires all school employees to be fully vaccinated by October 18 (or be tested one-two times per week.)

Back to School Night schedules will be distributed by your child’s Principal. Back to School Nights will be held in person this year unless we experience a significant uptick in COVID cases and/or the health department directs the district otherwise.

As a community, we overcame many obstacles last year. I have no doubt we will continue to work toward the safest learning environment for our students and staff again this year. Here are a few reminders:

1. If you have questions, please consider emailing or calling someone (a teacher or school administrator.) We are happy to assist.
2. Keep in mind that even with a “normal” school opening, busses sometimes run a little behind, or other unexpected situations occur. This year will be no different. There will be bumps in the road. We will address them as they come up, with the utmost care for your child and health and safety protocols.
3. Just like in years past, many teachers work hard to build rapport and get to know students in their classes prior to diving into heavy content. This year is no different. Expect teachers to get to know your children before beginning instruction. A heavy emphasis is being placed on social-emotional learning and knowing how to recognize trauma, anxiety, or stress so that parents can be notified and children can receive necessary support.
4. We will need to monitor and adjust to the varied needs of children, particularly in response to the gaps they may have in learning and socialization. Last year some students attended school regularly and/or had a trusted educational caregiver to assist them while home. Others had very little support. Some have not been in our school buildings for eighteen months. I am confident that our faculty and staff can and will support the varied needs of our students. Please be patient and communicate with us so we may assist in the academic and social growth of your child.

Thank you for your continued support of our district. We look forward to welcoming your children to our schools. As a reminder, the first day of school is **Tuesday, September 7** for a full day of instruction. I wish all of our Vernon families a safe, healthy, and happy return to schools where excited teachers await your arrival.

Sincerely,

Karen D'Avino

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Superintendent of Schools