



Office of the Superintendent 08/15/20 Faculty September Restart Update

August 15, 2020

Dear HCST Instructional Community:

There are no adequate words to express my gratitude for your dedication, professionalism and commitment to our students during this challenging time. Under the direction of Governor Murphy, school districts will reopen this fall following the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) *The Road Back* guidelines. As the recommendations from State and public health officials continue to change, I appreciate your understanding and flexibility. Too many unknowns still exist for me to be able to say, with certainty, what the first day, or week of school will look like. However, I have full confidence in our ReStart Committee's collective efforts to continue to improve and innovate through our planning and preparation. We recognize this is an unsettling time for us all, but when we unite as a cohesive team, we will emerge better and stronger as we experience and create our new educational environment.

The Hudson County Schools of Technology has worked diligently in collaboration with our Principals, Educational Administrators, Board Members, Union President, and our local Health Department to ensure a positive transition in welcoming our 2020/2021 School Year. Our facilities are clean and safe. Our ReStart Plan is the most-inclusive, least-invasive, gradual re-entry. Our Administration and Staff have planned and prepared for your return and are here to support the entire HCST Family through this time.

The ReStart Committee acknowledges there will never be an online program that can replace in-person instruction with a highly qualified teacher. The health and well-being of our staff and students is our number one priority, while providing quality education to our students. With this in mind, the Committee mirrored our successful Gradual Re-Entry Plan which our Central Office Staff, Educational Administrators, Operations and twelve-month Support Staff followed since Spring. There is no doubt that it took many of us time to feel comfortable working on-site again. The gradual re-entry provided us an opportunity to settle-in to our new norm. It further proved that together, we could get through this with positive experiences to share.

With consideration of the Governor's recent [Executive Order](#) and input from the ReStart Committee, our Board, faculty, staff, parents/guardians, along with Principals and Educational Administrators, we have updated our plan with the following information:

The 20/21 SY will begin **virtually** for all students and **on-site** for **staff only**; providing the opportunity for instructors and staff to reacclimate themselves with the building and become familiar with the new, extensive safety procedures that have been implemented. We want you all to feel comfortable and safe as you ease your way back to our campuses while we embark on this educational journey, together, while social distancing.

Reporting Information and Important Dates

Your Principal/Supervisor will provide specific school information, class schedules and expectations in the weeks ahead.

In the meantime, I invite you to visit our buildings during the month of August, *Monday through Thursday*, to get acclimated to the enhanced facility procedures and ease your way into your classrooms for set-up. While our students will begin their school year with Remote Instruction, all faculty and staff are expected to work on-site for the 2020/2021 School Year.*

- **Tuesday, September 8, 2020** - 20/21SY Officially Begins! All faculty and staff will report on-site to Explore Middle School 180 9th Street for planning and various professional development opportunities. Your principal will provide you with a schedule for the start of the school year.
- The HCST STUDENT 20/21 School Year will begin with Remote Learning, following a delayed opening schedule on **Wednesday, September 9, 2020** for Explore MS. During this time, you will be able to remain in your classroom to provide virtual teaching to your students through synchronous and asynchronous instruction - Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, your virtual teaching will continue at home. This arrangement will continue until Friday, September 26, 2020. The instructional hours for the Middle School will be 9:30am - 2:15pm.
- Hybrid/In-person Instruction will begin for students the week of **September 28, 2020**, provided the data we receive from our local health department and NJDOE supports this model. Over 60% of our district parents/guardians surveyed selected the Hybrid Learning Model. In an effort to maintain the most effective gradual re-entry and safety precautions, we have planned that on any given day, Monday through Thursday, there will be no more than 30% of the total student population in the building at one time. Your Building Principal will review the most current attendance data when school reopens.
- 7:45am - 9:30am has been designated as your common planning and preparation time for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), professional development opportunities and other pertinent information during our gradual re-entry. All social distancing guidelines will be adhered.
 - Professional development will be provided by our colleagues who have demonstrated outstanding online instruction to support you. Please continue to share your best practice discoveries.
- Your PowerSchool class rosters will reflect which students are Virtual Learning and which will be Hybrid, with specific days assigned.
- During Hybrid/In-person Instruction, you will be responsible on-site for teaching the students physically present, as well as those learning within the Virtual Model 9:30am - 2:15pm.
- It is expected that students will attend school daily, virtual or in-person.
 - The summer has provided your school's ReStart Committee time to plan and prepare. A more consistent schedule for delivery of instruction and student attendance has been created by assessing best practices and considering committee feedback. Updates will be provided to you by your Principals/Supervisors.

This plan will remain in effect for the first marking period, *reassessed on a weekly basis with collective input from our local health officials and the NJDOE* to guide our next phase of re-entry.

The students have received the updated learning model elements as featured below:

Choice 1: HYBRID Learning Model (on-site and virtual)

- Students will receive 5 days of instruction per week:
 - **1 day of on-site** instruction, **9:30am - 2:15pm** (scheduled Monday - Thursday) *subject to change based on parental/guardian Commitment to Learning Consent responses; survey data yielded approximately 30% of students per day assigned by grade-level.* Your reporting day will be provided via email.
 - **4 days virtual** through Google Classroom platform
- Lessons will be delivered for in-person instruction as well as through live (synchronous) and online/recorded (asynchronous) instruction.
- Special Education Accommodations will be made as needed; the Child Study Team will continue to review IEPs and 504s to make adjustments pertinent to the current learning environment.
- Parents/Guardians may opt-out to switch to the Virtual Model, at any time, with authorization from the student's school principal.

Choice 2: Full-Time VIRTUAL Learning Model

- Students will receive 5 days of virtual online instruction through Google Classroom platform **9:30am - 2:15pm**.
- Lessons will be developed and delivered through live (synchronous) and online/recorded (asynchronous) instruction.
- Special Education Accommodations will be made as needed; the Child Study Team will continue to review IEPs and 504s to make adjustments pertinent to the current learning environment.
- Parents/Guardians may NOT switch to the Hybrid Learning Model within the current marking period. *Commitment to the virtual model is for the first full marking period.*
- Prior to our second marking period, parents will be able to opt-in to the Hybrid Learning Model for the second marking period (November 16, 2020 - January 29, 2021), assuming State and Federal guidelines allow in-person education.

Please keep in mind that the plan is subject to change pending approval by the NJDOE and new guidance / guidelines from the CDC and State of New Jersey.

Reasonable Staff Accommodations

In unison with school districts throughout Hudson County, we know returning to work may pose a new set of challenges for our current situations. Rest assured, all reasonable requests for accommodations will be considered by the appointed 504 ReEntry Committee, who will meet with staff on an individual basis. Discussions will remain confidential and maintained in the employee's personnel file.

Child Care Services

A Child Care Survey was distributed last week to help us determine your child care needs for the 20/21 School Year. If you haven't done so already, please respond to the survey <https://forms.gle/k1X9mGvWFkYyiHxE6>. We are exploring options to support our returning faculty and staff with children. As soon as more information becomes available, those who completed the survey will be informed of possible options.

Face Coverings:

Masks will be required by students and staff while on school property, which includes school vehicles, with outdoor Physical Education and while lunch as the ONLY exceptions. We will do what is possible to make necessary accommodations for those with medical conditions. In the interest of the safety and health of our entire community, **we have asked that those unable or unwilling to wear a mask on school property remain in the Full-Time Virtual Learning Model.**

Food Services

The HCST Meal Program will continue to be offered to our students and staff. Please visit <https://sites.google.com/hcstonline.org/foodservices> for the most up-to-date information. All food will be provided in a Grab and Go style.

Technology

Our Tech Team is here to support your transition back to school! Each tech has a designated role in facilitating your needs. The team is working through the summer, so schedule a time to come on-site and work with your school's technicians with any challenges or training.

IMPORTANT: be sure to visit <https://helpdesk.hcstonline.org/> to submit any of your technology needs.

Well Wishes

Let's encourage one another during this unprecedented time. Want to wish our HCST Family well as we embark on a new school year? Submit your well wishes here: [#HCSTstrong Well Wishes](#)

Though these are not easy decisions, please know the health and safety of our community are at the forefront of our planning. I reflect on the quote from Albert Einstein, "In the middle of every difficulty, lies opportunity." I look forward to taking this difficult journey with you in creating opportunities for our students and our district to rise above these challenges - HCSTstrong.

Thank You for Your Support,



Superintendent

Amy Lin-Rodriguez, Superintendent ▪ Telephone (201) 662-6700 ▪ One High Tech Way ▪ Secaucus, NJ 07094

Mission Statement

The Hudson County Schools of Technology is a visionary community that inspires creative independent thinking through diverse learning opportunities

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