



Dr. Ronald Hattar
Superintendent of Schools

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September 26, 2020

Dear Yorktown School Community,

I hope that the official start of autumn finds everyone healthy and well. As I prepared this letter, I fondly observed our students departing our campus for a long weekend with such joy and enthusiasm. School certainly looks different for our students. The desks are spaced apart. Some students are participating in class on a computer. Barriers between seats are in place in the cafeterias at our middle and high schools. Masks are being worn in school. The school buses, once crowded, are transporting fewer students each day. However, with all of my interactions with our students, the recurring theme that I am hearing is how happy our children are to be back in school. Despite the changes to the schooling experience, regardless of how different things might seem, our children are brimming with joy to be back in their schools. I speak to many students each day, and the responses I hear overwhelmingly reflect positive enthusiasm to be back in school.

Below are some important updates for our school community:

1. Technology Outages

Unfortunately, we have experienced some technology outages during our opening weeks. I completely and fully understand the frustration that accompanies any technology outage. On Wednesday evening we identified two key issues that we were able to address, which resulted in a more seamless remote learning experience for students on Thursday and Friday. With these network adjustments in place, it is my expectation that our students will continue to have better technology connectivity during their remote learning day.

To further assist in this effort, our technology department is asking that you fully shut down (or restart) your device daily.

2. Transportation

As you may be aware, our district has a new transportation provider that acquired the existing bus contract in the last weeks of August. With a limited amount of time available to mobilize before school began, Total Transportation has been doing everything they can to become familiar with our bus routes and routines, and to bring staffing up to full strength.

Although steadily improving, we recognize that some buses continue to run behind schedule and that some drivers are still becoming familiar with the routes. Please know that Mr. Cole, Ms. Sauber, and I are working closely with the senior management team of Total Transportation, including daily conversations, to make sure the issues that we have observed are promptly corrected.

We greatly appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through this critical portion of our school operation. We do recognize that Total Transportation has only been transporting our students for six days at this point (three days for the Group A routes and three days for the Group B routes), and while Total Transportation has made good strides during this short time, we will continue our daily efforts with them until we meet the level of performance that our students deserve.

3. Schedule for Mondays

When we distributed our reopening plan in August, we shared that Mondays in September would be used for remote learning and for professional development for faculty and staff, and that a decision on Mondays for October and beyond would be made in late-September. As I previously noted, planning instruction for students participating in remote learning and in-person learning simultaneously requires extensive planning, coordination, and ongoing training. As we consider our pathway forward on balancing how to return our students to school on Mondays while also providing faculty and staff with important opportunities for collaborative planning and professional development time, the next phase of our reopening is outlined below.

- ❖ October 5 (similar to September 14 and 21) will once again be a half remote learning day for students and a half day for staff development.
- ❖ Schools are closed on October 12, Columbus Day.
- ❖ October 19 will be an in-person day for students in Group A, operating on a three-hour delayed arrival schedule for students. Students in group B will be on a remote learning day. Buses will follow a three-hour delay schedule. For example, if your bus is

typically scheduled to arrive for pick up at your home bus stop at 7:30 a.m., the bus will arrive at 10:30 a.m.

- ❖ October 26 will be an in-person day for students in Group B, operating on a three-hour delayed arrival schedule for students. Students in Group A will be on a remote learning day. Buses will follow a three-hour delay schedule as well.
- ❖ The alternating Monday schedule will continue in the same three-hour delay format, unless otherwise stated. This results in three Mondays of in-person instruction for each group, Group A and Group B, between October 19 and Thanksgiving. We will review this model in mid-November to determine if modifications are necessary beyond Thanksgiving.
- ❖ Lunch will not be served in our schools on Mondays; however, students should bring a snack.
- ❖ The Remote Learning Center at French Hill will have increased capacity to accommodate additional students in grades K-6. We will also be creating a school bus stop at French Hill on Mondays so students at French Hill on Monday may be transported to school if they have an in-person learning day. If you are interested in enrolling in the French Hill program on Mondays, please access: <https://www.yorktown.org/home/remote-learning-center>. All of the other bus pick up stops that normally occur at the other before-school child care locations in town will continue to operate on Mondays on the delayed opening schedule noted above.

While the increased in-person instructional time is enthusiastically welcomed, I also understand the circumstances that accompany anything less than a full day of instruction for students. However, increasing in-person instructional time for our children is an important step in supporting our students through their return to school. This schedule change results in three Mondays of in-person instruction for each group, Group A and Group B, between October 19 and Thanksgiving.

With regard to a delayed opening approach rather than an early dismissal, after fully considering all 13 grade levels in our district, a delayed start provides students greater in-person instructional time with their teachers as well as some other benefits when compared to an early dismissal approach.

4. USDA Free School Lunch Program

Beginning October 1, 2020, free lunch will be available for all children in the Yorktown Central School District under the age of 19 regardless of household income. This is a **temporary program**, funded by the US Department of Agriculture. This temporary program is scheduled to run until December 31, 2020, however, it may end sooner if the federal funds run out.

Only complete school meals will be free, and are limited to one lunch per child, per day. Snacks, drinks, second meals, and anything else that would normally carry an extra charge will still be full price and will have to be paid for at the time of purchase.

There will be no change to the way meals are served. There is no change for students who choose to bring their lunch from home on any given day.

If your child is normally eligible for free or reduced-price meals, you still need to fill out the **2020-2021 Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals**. If a new application is not received for the current school year, you will be required to start paying full price when this temporary program ends. Students interested in free lunch on their remote day may contact yorktowngrabandgo@yorktown.org to learn how to pick up a free lunch.

5. Daily Health Screening

As a reminder, it is extremely important that you complete the daily EZSCRN attestation for your child each morning prior to arrival at school. While we are taking temperatures upon arrival to school, EZSCRN accounts for additional important information such as COVID-like symptoms, direct exposure to a confirmed positive COVID case, and travel to a region where COVID transmission is high. You may access the EZSCRN platform using the website: <https://app.ezscrn.com/#/login> or you may use the EZSCRN app for Apple products.

I wish you an enjoyable weekend, and I thank you for your continued support of the Yorktown Central School District.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Hattar", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Ron Hattar