



**Union County Educational Services  
Commission**

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September 29, 2020

Dear Parents and Family Members:

I hope this letter finds you and your families well.

As we conclude the first month of the 2020-21 school year, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the reopening of Union County ESC schools for hybrid instructional programs.

When we made the decision to begin the year on a remote learning schedule, we did so based upon our resolute responsibility to the health, safety and wellness of our students, families, and faculty members. We identified several goals in staffing, training, and building operations that required attention prior to returning to classrooms. I am pleased to report that considerable progress has been made in all areas.

Our administrators, teachers and support staff have put forth admirable effort since returning on September 1. Their genuine concern for your children was readily apparent during my visits to schools over the past few weeks. In addition to planning engaging remote lessons for students, our teaching staff have participated in training focused on health and safety protocols; remote engagement strategies; and adaptive online instruction. We installed air purification systems in health offices; met with many staff regarding leave or accommodations; and filled several vacant positions at Crossroads School, Lamberts Mill Academy and Westlake School.

With the support of our Board of Directors, we also contracted Trane Technologies – an industry leader in commercial heating, ventilating and air conditioning - to conduct environmental assessments in all our buildings. Engineers will be on site from October 5-9, 2020 and information obtained from this comprehensive evaluation of our HVAC systems will provide important information needed to inform reopening decisions.

We fully recognize the numerous challenges and frustrations associated with remote learning, particularly for students with disabilities and their families, and remain committed to the strategic shift to hybrid learning beginning in mid-October provided that staffing ensures adequate student supervision and social distancing; community transmission rates remain low; and no unforeseen issues arise during the environmental assessment. All reopening decisions will be made on a school-by-school basis with priority given to special education programs.

I will discuss reopening plans at the Board of Directors Meeting on October 7, 2020 and you can expect to receive a letter regarding anticipated return dates, cohort schedules and reminders about health and safety procedures shortly after the Board Meeting. We will also contact parents and family members who previously requested full-time remote learning programs to confirm their intentions of sending their children back to school.

In the meantime, I remind parents who experience technology challenges during remote instruction to submit a helpdesk ticket by email at: [student.850420@helpdesk.schoolassetmanager.com](mailto:student.850420@helpdesk.schoolassetmanager.com). Please remember to include your child's name, school, brief description of the issue, and your telephone number and/or email address and a member of our IT Department will contact you promptly to resolve the issue.

I also encourage parents who are facing challenges related to childcare costs while schools are on remote learning to explore two potential options for financial assistance - The New Jersey School-Age Tuition Assistance Program at [childcare.nj.gov](http://childcare.nj.gov) and the Safe Learning Settings Grant at [ucnj.org/safe-learning-settings-grant-family-application](http://ucnj.org/safe-learning-settings-grant-family-application). Please contact your Principal or School Social Workers if you require assistance completing either application.

On behalf of our administrators and staff, I thank you for your continued partnership, flexibility, and patience during these most challenging times. We truly look forward to welcoming students back to our classrooms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Kowalski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Michael J. Kowalski  
Acting Superintendent