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<p>Superintendent of Schools</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.</p>

September 25, 2020

Dear West Orange Public School Community,

I hope this finds you well as we come to the end of our second full week of virtual schooling. I would like to once again take an opportunity to thank you and your children for your cooperation, partnership, and efforts in helping to make this start to the school year as successful as possible.

As much as we can feel proud and assured in the way which we have gotten off to a relatively smooth start, our collective attention and focus remains on commencing on site instruction in some form as soon as possible.

Therefore, this correspondence serves two purposes: the first is to provide a timeline of key dates and communications which occurred over the summer to provide some useful context as to how we have arrived where we are today. Second, is to offer a concrete timeline as to the remaining steps which need to be taken in order to return to school in person.

Timeline:

June 26, 2020: At approximately 6:00 PM, the New Jersey Department of Education released The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education. This document outlined the necessary requirements and protocol required for starting the school year.

July 20, 2020: At the public Board of Education meeting a draft plan for a hybrid cohort model was presented to the public.

August 6, 2020: A virtual town hall panel discussion is held at which time the district provides information with regard to the ongoing challenges concerning in person instruction. The district's intention to start the school year virtually with a phase into the hybrid cohort model is shared.

August 12, 2020: Governor Murphy announced that public schools in New Jersey have the option of starting the academic year with no in person classes if they were unable to certify compliance with proper health and safety standards.

August 14, 2020: I released a detailed correspondence to parents outlining each health and safety consideration which needed further reconciliation the most notable being our ventilation systems. ([Update from Superintendent 8.14.2020](#))

August 17, 2020: The revised detailed district reopening plan is presented at the public Board of Education meeting and approved by the Board of Education. ([Restart & Recovery Plan Presentation 8.17.2020](#))

August 18, 2020: The district’s plan is shared with the community via email and posted to social media and the district website. It is forwarded to the Essex County Executive Superintendent for review and final approval. (Approval received from NJDOE, 9-23)

August 24, 2020: The district’s architects of record, EI Associates, present a situation report and ventilation remediation plan at the public Board of Education meeting. ([Ventilation Presentation 9.21.2020](#))

August 26, 2020: I disseminated a detailed letter to parents with a number of key updates including links to the virtual school day schedules. ([Looking Ahead 8.26.2020](#))

September 10, 2020: The Road Back Guidebook for Students and Parents of the West Orange Public Schools is distributed; the administration presented key highlights and takeaways from the guidebook at the public BOE meeting. ([The Road Back Guidebook for Student & Parents](#))

At this juncture, all safety and health considerations previously noted have been addressed with the exception of the remediation of the district's ventilation systems.

Timeline and key considerations for ventilation remediation in order to return to in person instruction in school.

The ventilation situation report from EI Associates found that a total of 138 spaces in the district were without mechanical ventilation: 47 classrooms and 91 offices. Further, many of the existing classroom Univent systems are too old to accommodate MERV-13 filters or higher.

The CDC’s guidance for business and employers responding to Coronavirus disease as well as the NJDOE checklist for the reopening of school 2000/2021 explicitly states, “ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level free space. Improve central air filtration to the MERV-13 or higher compatible filter.

Solutions:

In working in collaboration with our architects and engineers of record, the district will install bipolar ionization technology on all classroom Uninvents as well as any schools with rooftop units. This technology has been empirically tested by the FAA and proven to be effective on the coronavirus particles. In spaces without mechanical ventilation but with windows, the district will install mobile purification units with bipolar ionization devices installed in them. Spaces without windows and mechanical ventilation will be taken off-line and not utilized.

Timeline:

September 10, 2020: The Board of Education approved a proposal from EI Associates to conduct site walk-throughs in order to develop a parts list for the vendor.

September 21, 2020: A purchase order was issued for the purchase of 170 bipolar ionization mobile units.

September 23, 2020: EI Associates concluded their site walk-throughs and parts list.

September 24, 2020: DMV engineering provided a quote for the BPI units plus installation.

September 25, 2020: A purchase order was issued to DMV engineering.

October 20, 2020: Estimated arrival date of the mobile purification units.

October 23, 2020: Estimated delivery date of BPI parts for installation on universe and rooftop units.

November 2, 2020: Deployment of mobile purification devices to school buildings to be completed by November 6.

November 9, 2020: Completion of installation of VPR units on Univent and rooftop units.

Installations will be prioritized by elementary and self-contained special education classroom spaces. Though the vendors have given us fairly confident estimates of delivery dates for the equipment, the timeline for completion is dependent upon the supply chain operating as promised.

Periodic updates will be provided at Public Board of Education meetings and written Return to School reports.

I thank you in advance for your time, attention, and patience as we work to open our schools safely for our students and staff.

Sincerely,



J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools