

WALLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
“There is Power in Pride”
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Dr. James J. Albro
Superintendent of Schools
albrowboe.org

JEFFERSON SCHOOL
32 Pine Street
Wallington, NJ 07057

August 20, 2020

Dear Wallington Community:

As we prepare for the new school year, it is my hope this letter finds you all well and in good health.

From the conversations I have had with parents, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders in our community I can appreciate and understand the frustration many of us are feeling with the ever-changing information and guidance we are receiving on school plans for reopening. Please know that our district has done its best to comply with these guidelines in order to open our schools safely in September. There has been a great deal of work and time devoted by many parents, staff members, Board Trustees, and community members to accomplish the goal of opening our schools in September for in-person instruction. As you are aware, I am not only entrusted with the education of our students, but also with the health, safety, and well-being of all who attend and work in our schools. **Unfortunately at this time it will be my recommendation to the Board of Education that our Wallington Public Schools begin instruction virtually until October 13, 2020 at which time we hope to begin with phase I of our hybrid reopening plan.**

As we are beginning to see in numerous districts in our county and state, the reality of opening for in-person instruction with less than specific guidance from the State and Federal Government is difficult to achieve in such a short period of time. When one considers the many necessary plans, precautions, personnel, and practices that must be in place on the first day of school in order to meet the mandated guidelines put forth from the Department of Education’s “Road Back” Plan (released at the end of June), it becomes apparent that meeting the mandated protocols would be difficult to achieve even in the best of circumstances.

Despite the best efforts of many on my staff and in this community, it has become clear that it is unrealistic to open schools for hybrid instruction in September, as due to overwhelming demands we are not yet in receipt of a number of protective supplies (PPE) and sanitation equipment required to do so safely and within the guidelines of the Department of Education’s plan. Additionally, adequate staffing of our schools is of concern as there are staff members who may be unable to return to on-site assignments due to disabilities, personal health issues, or are

simply not able to return to assignments on specific days because of the conflicts between their work schedules and those of their children's schools. This will require the district to recruit and employ additional staff to cover any absences. The short time period we have had to finalize our plans, the regional and national shortage of necessary PPE, anticipated staffing issues, and the ever-changing guidance we have received from the State of New Jersey over the last 6 weeks has made it evident that a virtual opening to the school year will be the safest and most effective way to open our schools. Our goal continues to be to return to in-person instruction as soon as possible. While students are working virtually we will continue to assess our readiness as we approach our October 13, 2020 reopening date. Should there be any changes to our reopening plans based on our assessments, they will be communicated to you as soon as possible.

In the next three weeks, prior to the opening of schools, you will be receiving several communications from building principals and other professionals to enable our students to begin virtual instruction as seamlessly as possible. Information about Chromebook pick up, text and material distribution, and setting up for the online platforms our students will need will be communicated to you. In addition, our staff will be working to prepare for a virtual opening of school by refining and improving skills to deliver effective, engaging, and consistent virtual instruction for our students.

Neither I, nor the Wallington Board of Education take this decision lightly. Now more than ever, we recognize the importance of delivering a quality education to our students, and are committed to providing this in the safest manner possible.

I thank you for your patience and understanding as we all navigate through this public health emergency together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James J. Albro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Dr. James J. Albro
Superintendent of Schools