

August 20, 2020

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Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Yonkers Public Schools Learning Community,

In our July message for the District's School Reopening Plan, Board of Education President Rev. Steve Lopez and I noted, *the most complex opening of schools in our lifetime is before us for the 2020-2021 school year*. This remains true today. Our priorities continue to be the health, safety and well-being of everyone, robust teaching and learning and equity. We will not compromise on ensuring a safe, organized return to school for students, staff and families.

Throughout the summer, we have sought feedback and carefully listened to our parents/guardians, school administrators, teachers, staff and students. We have offered eight (8) Town Hall meetings in-person and via Zoom in English and Spanish, participated in two (2) Town Hall meetings sponsored by our local elected officials, surveyed our parents/guardians willingness to send their child to school, collaborated with our employee bargaining units and responded to emails and phone calls. Collectively, this represents approximately 10,000 verbal and written communications as well as hundreds of hours of collaborative discussions.

What we know is that Governor Cuomo announced that the levels of COVID-19 are low enough to open schools by adhering to stringent New York State Education Department and Department of Health guidelines. Based on the feedback we received, we also know that a significant number of our parents/guardians and staff are concerned over the continued spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, at today's Board of Education Special Meeting, the Trustees, based on my recommendation, have decided that **all Yonkers Public Schools students will begin the school year using our Online Remote Instruction model according to our School Reopening Plan posted on the District's website. Instruction will begin for students as follow:**

- **Tuesday, September 8 - Kindergarten through grade twelve (12) students begin instruction remotely,**
- **Wednesday, September 9, Prekindergarten students will participate in a half-day orientation remotely,**
- **Thursday, September 10, Prekindergarten students begin instruction remotely.**

On Monday, October 5, districtwide students will transition to our Hybrid Instruction model - all students are assigned to specific groups and receive instruction in-person at school sites on designated days of the week as well as online remotely from home on the other days of the week. Parents/guardians will have the option to continue their child's education using only our Online Remote Instruction model. Additional information will be sent to parents/guardians next week.

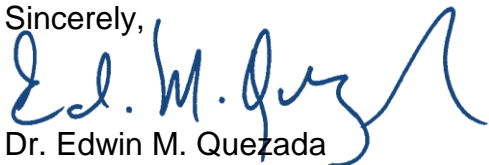
This was not an easy decision. We are dealing with unprecedented circumstances that must constantly be balanced against the core of every decision we make - the academic, social-emotional and wellness needs of our students. Unequivocally, Yonkers children thrive through in-person instruction and interaction with our highly qualified caring administrators, teachers and staff. My recommendation to the Trustees was made after a thorough analysis the facts, state education and health requirements, establishing partnerships with local health organizations, feedback from our school leadership teams, assessments from my Central Office administrative team and collaborations with our employee bargaining units.

Let me extend my appreciation to the parents/guardians, staff, students and school community members who attended or tuned in for our Town Hall meetings. More meetings will be provided throughout August, September and October. As a reminder, all of our meeting are streamed live and available on demand on the District website, www.yonkerspublicschools.org.

Our School Reopening Plan will continuously evolve through collective feedback from all stakeholders and the status of pandemic changes. The success of this plan relies on our strong partnerships within our community, the relentless commitment from every stakeholder and continuous communication. We remain steadfast to provide a reopening plan that addresses the collective needs of Yonkers Public Schools stakeholders, always asking the question, are the decisions we are making in the best interest of our students.

Thank you for patience and partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed. M. Quezada". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada

C: President Rev. Steve Lopez, Vice President Ramos-Meier and Trustees of the Board of Education