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September 30, 2020

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Yonkers Public Schools Faculty and Staff,

In less than a week on October 5, 2020, our school district will shift from 100% Online Remote instruction for all students to Hybrid Instruction. It is important for me to reiterate that this transition is designed first and foremost to ensure the health and safety of every individual in school buildings to the best of our ability. There are challenges we will confront and like school district's across Westchester County that are providing in-person instruction, we must relentlessly persevere for the sake of our students' education because that is not only our job, it is our vocation.

Children, more significantly urban children, thrive when they are in school taught by highly qualified, caring educators and supporting adults. Nothing can replace in-person teaching and learning. A recent District survey disclosed that more than two-thirds of our families want in-person instruction for their children. They want the stability provided by public schools. Our job is to ensure Yonkers students and families continue to have confidence that, despite the challenges, we will deliver the best education possible, as we have in the past.

Today, more than ever, we are in a fight for public education. Public educators are under a spotlight and must constantly demonstrate their commitment and relevance during this prolonged unprecedented time. You have proven that Yonkers' professionals are capable of doing this and more. Incredible work is already in place to meet the needs of our students. This was accomplished through a partnership embraced by administrators, teachers, civil service and central office staff building on the strong bonds you have forged with your students and families.

The success we have achieved since the start of the school year, perfecting 100% online remote teaching and learning using dedicated districtwide platforms, will be the foundation that supports Hybrid Instruction. Teachers and administrators have become proficient in using Microsoft Teams, Nearpod and Seesaw to effectively reach our students and families. What were once challenges have evolved into assets that expand our pedagogical repertoire. We must continue to engage in meaningful collaboration and foster a genuine willingness to learn more, to do more, and to demonstrate our love for children at an even higher level. I am extremely proud of everyone.

As you are aware, Hybrid Instruction requires teachers to use the learned technologies to continue providing equitable continuity of instruction to students while in-person at school, as well as those students participating remotely from home. Parents, whether they chose to participate in Hybrid or remain in 100% Online Remote Instruction, have made it very clear that they uncompromisingly expect that the teacher who began the year with their children on September 8th, will continue to provide instruction in the Hybrid environment. You have established a rapport and effective communications with both the students and families. As educators, we understand that much of our success is based upon relationships and changing teachers at this point will only create chaos for our students and their families. During the first month of instruction, you leveraged our platforms to provide outstanding instruction for your students. Therefore, it is expected that during Hybrid Instruction you will continue to be responsible for all of the students currently on your roster(s) as well as new students assigned to classes as defined in the teachers' contract.

Moving forward your daily responsibility is to implement the full curriculum to your students through a full day of in-person and remote synchronous and asynchronous instruction and learning. As outlined in our Reopening Plan and the Addendum to Appendix 6: Teaching and Learning Daily Instruction (posted August 20, 2020 on the District's website and being implemented in schools by administrators), students are assigned to four groups/tracks - Group A and B are participating in Hybrid Instruction in-person two (2) days a week at school, Group D opted to remain 100% Online Remote and Group C are selected self-contained special education students who are in school four (4) days a week.

General education teachers, as an example, will provide in-person instruction for Group A and Group D will follow the instruction online along with Group A. Group B can be working independently from home on the lessons that you prepared for them or follow the instruction online along with Groups A and D. Your schedule must include a daily check-in with students working independently from home. This should occur during community meeting times or other times available in your schedule to ensure all students are following along. This is not an easy task. Grouping is challenging and rewarding when it is done in person.

As with everything we have done since March, this is a continuous learning experience that requires ongoing discussions, conducting research and evaluating our practices. By following this evidence-based collegial approach, we will identify changes that need to be made to our current Hybrid Model. As life-long learners, we must be students of our work. I am confident that our teachers' ingenuity, creativity and more importantly their love for children will ensure that this modality works.

To be clear, the District is not changing the professional responsibilities and mandates of our jobs. We are being asked to change with the times and retool our methods for delivering instruction and services. No longer can we shy away from this reality. I am asking you to consider the questions below from the vantage point of a professional educator, as a parent and most importantly as a student. Carefully consider the impact on each group.

- How will I be responsible for educating all of my students whether they are in-person or remote?
- How will I prepare appropriate instructional materials to address the individual needs of my students for in-person and remote instruction?
- How will I maintain my teacher webpage so that parents and students are fully aware of my expectations, students requirements and communications?
- How will I be an active partner in maintaining the health and safety of everyone in the learning community of which I am a member?

I firmly believe your answers to these questions will provide a positive trajectory for your work implementing Hybrid Instruction. The leadership of the bargaining units have demonstrated their commitment to ensure our District continues to excel. I am confident we will continue to work with bargaining units' leadership to successfully resolve any open issues.

In a very short period of time we have accomplished so much. It required 24/7 support of the District's central office team, collaboration with our bargaining units leadership, the relentless focus of school educators, civil service staff and the great support we received from parents/guardians as well as our wonderful students.

The following is a sampling of Instructional accomplishments.

- Over 90% of our students participate daily, and we are working on resolving the needs of the 10%.
- Significantly, expanded online instructional resources are available for teachers, students and parents.
- A Parent Academy was initiated offering in-person and online tutorials in multiple languages.
- Over 5,000 student laptops and tablets were borrowed by our families.
- Schools safely organized on-site distribution of instructional materials to students.
- Hundreds of hours of professional development were offered by central administration and in schools.
- A districtwide elementary reading program is being implemented.

In terms of Health and Safety, our School Facilities Management Department has performed admirably. The following merely highlights some of their ongoing priorities.

- Over 150 water fillers are being installed in schools.
- Nine (9) HVAC companies are remediating air quality concerns in schools.
- Windows repairs are being completed in schools.
- Hands-free body temperature devices are in all schools as well as infra-red thermometers.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available in all schools.

I conclude this letter by asking you to give the District's children the best of you. They have suffered enough during this Pandemic and there is no one better equipped to address their needs than Yonkers Public Schools educators and staff.

Looking forward to seeing you in your classrooms with our precious students on October 5, 2020.

Sincerely,



Dr. Edwin M. Quezada

C: President Rev. Steve Lopez, Vice President Ramos-Meier
and Trustees of the Board of Education
Carmen Goodstein, President, Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs