

Dear KIPP Newark Families,

Throughout this pandemic, we have committed to keeping all of our students, teammates, and families safe, connected, and learning no matter the circumstance. Part of this promise involves transparent communication as we learn new information and need to pivot our plan.

Even as COVID rates rise, Governor Murphy has continued to share the importance of schools staying open given the learning needs of our students and the key services schools provide academically and beyond that can't be captured in remote learning. At KIPP, we very much want to see our students back in classrooms since we know there is no substitute for in-person learning and community, and about half of our families have shared their preference for the hybrid model which we'd hoped to begin in early January.

However, as you know, case rates have been rising in Newark - which recently prompted the City of Newark to call a 10-day lockdown - and our regions' status has been "orange" in the state's COVID activity ratings (more on this data below) for the past two weeks. **Because of the state-wide health data and the expected continued rise of cases over the next few weeks, we are postponing our planned return to buildings for staff the week of January 4 and for students the week of January 11th.** In addition to making the decision to postpone, we have put together clearer criteria that we will use moving forward to make decisions about when and how we reopen so that families have more insight into how we are making these decisions.

## **What criteria will we use to make decisions?**

We all want to open schools, but need to do so as safely as possible. The State of New Jersey releases a [COVID-19 Weekly Activity Report](#) that provides data on COVID-19 transmission risk and pulls county level data from [COVID Act Now](#). This report assesses risk and then assigns a risk level sorted into four color categories: Green (low risk), Yellow (moderate risk), Orange (high risk) and Red (very high risk).

Moving forward we plan to use the State's weekly report to assess the public health situation at the county level and the following will determine when we're able to safely open schools:

- The Essex/Camden County positivity rate is below 10% - falling into the Yellow category - for two consecutive weeks

AND

- The rate of daily new cases per 100k people in Essex/Camden County is below 10 - falling into the Yellow category - for two consecutive weeks

If the rates are higher and our county is deemed Orange or Red, then it means the virus is moving rapidly, and it is not safe to open schools. It is important to note that we will also be consulting with the Newark Health Department and will defer to them should they determine the citywide rates are too high to safely open schools, even if the Essex County rates are lower.

## What does this look like in action?

See below for a sketch of what our calendar will look like **if the state data on 1/7 and 1/14 shows that our region (the Northeast region and/or Newark specifically) is Yellow or Green, our calendar will run as follows:**

January 4 - 29	Students continue in 100% remote instruction with the same schedule they currently have.
February 1 - 12	Students who have selected hybrid will come back in small groups to reorient to school on their assigned day/s. Students who are not coming to school in person will have asynchronous assignments and may have some live classes/check-ins.
February 15 - 19	February Break: Schools Closed (no remote or in-person instruction)
February 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hybrid Model kicks off fully for students who chose that model</li><li>• Students in 100% remote return to live full day instruction</li></ul>

## What happens if we are Red or Orange as a region on January 7 or 14?

If we are Red or Orange on January 7 or 14, the dates above will be pushed back until we have two weeks in a row of being Yellow as a region. We will be able to let you know by 1/14 whether we are on track to have students return on the dates above, or if we will need to move back students return to later in February.

## What about Newark Public Schools and other charter schools?

We believe that it's important to partner with NPS and other charter networks in our city as we figure out how to come back together. We are in constant communication with Superintendent Leon and other charter schools and Newark, and will continue talking together about reopening timelines in the hopes that we can achieve some consensus and alignment on reopening understanding the impact that different reopening timelines have on families, although all schools have different factors to consider.

## Family Town Hall: Wednesday, December 9th from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

We know you may have questions about what all these decisions mean for your child's experience and the beginning of Quarter 3. Please plan to sign up and attend our next KIPP Newark Family Town Hall on Wednesday, December 9th from 6-7 p.m. [RSVP here](#) if you want to learn more about our reopening plans and ask any questions.

Thank you for your continued partnership during this difficult time. Let's continue to work together to keep our team & family safe.

Love,  
Ms. Belcher