

January 8th, 2021

Dear KIPP Newark Families,

I hope that everyone is staying safe and well after a challenging week. Our first week back in 2021 once again revealed blatant white supremacy in action with the storming of the Capitol Building incited by our elected leaders. The day proved to be an attack on our democracy after free elections that all of us, adults and children, watched unfold with varying reactions and emotions. As one KIPP Rise student poignantly shared in a student discussion this week, “I want to change the world, but I’m not sure if anyone is going to hear my voice.” In a world that remains fraught with racism and unfairness, **we aim to continue providing space to hear our students’ voices this week and always**, and to create classrooms where our children can grapple with issues of race, identity, and economic and social justice. As just one example of the conversations that happened in classrooms this week, our KIPP TEAM Academy team led with in student advisories, focusing on the milestones achieved in Georgia where Raphael Warnock became the first Black Democratic U.S. Senator elected in the South, thanks in large part to the work of Stacey Abrams in steadily building voter turnout in the state of Georgia. Their deck concluded, “Be like Raphael. Be like Stacey,” reminding us that we can always find reason for optimism and hope while confronting ugly realities.

Reopening Update: Reopening Delayed Again

I’m writing today to share an update on reopening. Back in December, we shared our criteria for reopening, and now, in January, we are continuing with the same rationale we shared in early December for how we are making reopening decisions. At that time, we shared that we would look at the county and city data week to week, and refrain from opening until we’ve had two weeks on yellow. We also shared that we would continue to work with Newark Public Schools and other charters so that we could collaborate on reopening where possible, and that we are working closely with city health officials to understand their guidance.

Many of you have heard that Newark Public Schools [decided to delay reopening until Monday, April 12](#), based in large part on the guidance of city health officials. Although we have not committed to aligning exactly with NPS as a general rule, in the spirit of being good partners in the fight against the pandemic in our city, and after understanding the health experts’ recommendations that also influenced NPS’s decision to push back, we have similarly decided to delay reopening (more details on exact dates below). We hope that this allows us to double down on our efforts in Quarter 3 to focus on instruction and student learning while maintaining our remote approach.

We are still finalizing exact dates, and will share more details in the coming weeks, but will be sticking with the cadence of reopening weeks we outlined earlier this year. We will resurvey families for Quarter 4 preference (hybrid or fully remote) again before students return. Again, although we will give more details on dates in the weeks to come, our schedule will generally look like this:

- Week of 4/5: Spring Break
- Week of 4/12: Teacher PD/Asynchronous Learning for Students
- Week of 4/19: Teacher In Person PD/Homecoming Week A (students return in smaller groups)
- Week of 4/26: Homecoming Week B (students return in smaller groups)
- Week of 5/3: Regular hybrid schedule begins for students choosing the hybrid model; students choosing fully remote continue with remote instruction

I know that the continued uncertainty and shifts are challenging, and that we all want to see our children safely back in school with us where we know the most impactful social and academic learning can occur. We hope that by continuing to share the rationale and criteria for making these tough decisions, we can build shared understanding and trust about our course of action in this difficult time. This decision may evoke different emotions in all of us – relief for some who have been worried about safety, and frustration for others as we know many families have been hoping our children can return in person. We will continue to work together to make our remote learning program as strong and productive as possible.

Family Town Hall FAQs and RSVP for Wednesday, 1/13 Town Hall

Please RSVP [here](#) to join our Family Town Hall on **Wednesday, January 13 from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.** and submit any questions you have that you'd like us to address! We cannot promise that we will have answers to all questions, as our plan will continue to evolve depending on guidance from the state and the current health situation, but we will do our best to communicate transparently and keep you updated as we learn new information. We will have Dr. Rahaman, an emergency room physician from NY Presbyterian, join us to help answer your medical questions as well.

Have a wonderful weekend, and please stay safe!

Love,
Ms. Belcher

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