

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of Human Resources, Curriculum & Instruction

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William O. George III, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Kimberly A. Pickus
Assistant Superintendent

June 10, 2020

Dear Parents/Families,

We hope that you continue to stay safe and healthy in the midst of the challenging circumstances that have accompanied the COVID-19 health emergency. Based upon productive feedback and dialogue with the school community regarding [the restructuring of the elementary schedule for the 2020-2021 school year](#), it is our intention to provide you with a detailed overview of this initiative. In addition, principals will communicate more specific details about the restructured schedule with their respective school communities at upcoming parent teacher organization meetings, if they haven't done so already.

The elementary schedule has been updated to expand upon inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all students, as well as to ensure that our curricula and programs are in alignment with recently updated NJSLs (NJ Student Learning Standards) and the draft 2020-2025 district strategic plan. The guidelines by which teachers and administrators create daily class schedules have been revised for all core academic areas, special subjects and non-academic activities. Increased time during the school day will be allotted for *Responsive Classroom* lessons, such as morning and afternoon meetings. In accordance with [New Jersey's Recess Law](#), 20 minutes of recess will also be scheduled each day. To implement this plan, a rotating six day special subject schedule will be utilized. Over a six day period, each class will participate in four periods of Health/PE instruction and two days of semester courses dedicated for the instruction of Art, Music, Spanish, and Digital Literacy and Design. The six day schedule also ensures that the district meets the state's requirement for 150 minutes of Health/PE instruction per week, exclusive of recess.

Digital Literacy and Design is a special subject area class that will be introduced next year in alignment with new [computer science and design thinking education standards](#). The NJDOE states that, "*The study of these disciplines focuses on deep understanding of concepts that enable students to think critically and systematically about leveraging technology to solve local and global issues. Authentic learning experiences that enable students to apply content knowledge, integrate concepts across disciplines, develop computational thinking skills, acquire and incorporate varied perspectives, and communicate with diverse audiences about the use and effects of computing prepares New Jersey students for college and careers.*" Within the Digital Literacy and Design curriculum framework, we also see great potential for the advancement and consistent implementation of our district's SPARK initiative, as well as dedicated instruction of traditional technology skills such as typing/keyboarding, which was identified as a community priority during the strategic planning process.

Adjustments to core academic instructional guidelines include some revisions to the length of literacy, mathematics, science and social studies blocks. These adjustments have allowed us to repurpose time each day to establish a WIN period. WIN, an acronym for *What I Need*, will be an opportunity for all students to be given personalized instruction that meets their individual academic and social-emotional needs. WIN will offer the option for reteaching concepts/skills previously introduced, while also providing enrichment that piques curiosities and challenges learners. In light of recent events and the abrupt need to shift to virtual home instruction, we anticipate WIN will also provide teachers with the latitude to revisit skills and/or knowledge from the previous grade level that may need reteaching on an individual basis. Classroom teachers, special education instructors, reading development teachers, mathematics specialists, personalized learning teachers (G&T), related services providers and ESL teachers (English as Second Language) will organize small group and individualized instruction. Staff may utilize the WIN period to schedule intervention and/or other related services when practical in addition to other times during the day when such sessions may be arranged.

Students will also be encouraged to utilize time during WIN to collaborate with classmates, e.g., book club discussions, as well as read independently, further develop writing pieces, conduct research for SPARK projects or pursue other passions as appropriate. WIN also creates the occasion to address the social emotional needs of our students in collaboration with each school's SBSS. Kindergarteners will continue to engage in play-based integrated centers during this block of time during the school day, e.g., dramatic play, blocks, math and science centers, puzzles, or sensory table activities. Rest assured that we are dedicated to providing your child with appropriate support structures and related services in order to make meaningful academic and social-emotional progress through the delivery of personalized instruction that meets the needs of our diverse learners.

Staff members may be reaching out to you to further discuss specific modifications to your child's instructional program based on the revised elementary schedule and instructional guidelines as necessary. This may include special education, G&T, ESL and reading/mathematics interventions. If you have any further questions, please contact your building principal, your child's teacher and/or case manager.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pickus".

Kimberly A. Pickus
Assistant Superintendent