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Dear Parents, Guardians, School District Representatives, and School Personnel:

In this update we will be covering our goal with reopening, space issues, staffing issues, technology, 1-1s and Memorandum of Agreements, availability of Locus Parentis during virtual sessions for those students without 1-1s, observation, and summary.

**Goal:** As you are aware, our continued goal has been to provide the optimum quality and quantity of IEP services as safely as possible has been further refined to offer a hybrid in person options by the ESY and 5 day a week instruction starting in the Fall.

**Space Issues:** To that end, we have constructed two new classrooms and started to hire back paraprofessionals, nursing, and other positions not required in the last school year, when we were virtual. We are still virtual at this moment in time, as we do not have approval from the county office of the New Jersey Department of Education for our new classrooms.

**Staffing Issues:** *Unfortunately, as many of you are aware from the news the labor markets are very tight and although we have coverage for all the teachers, there are some positions vacant due to family emergencies, life changes, and ensuring that onboarding occurs with adequate training to ensure that everyone is safe.* So, we are still in the process of hiring the required staff and safely onboarding them with three sets of criminal history checks. In fact, we had four staff start on Monday, so we are getting ever closer on that front.

**Technology:** with Jamf and Apple School the new iPads and Laptops were not deployed this week. However, we are able to use Google suite for educators and Zoom Professional, which enabled our teachers and therapists to teach synchronous materials to students.

**Memorandum of Agreements:** All the students with 1-1 Paraprofessionals in the IEPs have 1-1 Paraprofessionals and we have started sending out, 1-1s to the homes with completed Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs). The MOAs allow our 1-1s to operate as the locus parentis (person in place of a parent) in the hospital and/or home domicile, by stating what the 1-1s can do and cannot do. Specific language was given to us by both the Department of Health and the Department of Education. As per the NJDOE the paraprofessionals shall only provide services under their scope of practice and under direct and indirect supervision from certificated personnel, such as the therapists or teachers.

**Availability of Locus Parentis:** For the students who do not have 1-1s we are exploring reallocation of hospital staff to improve the availability of adult supervision during virtual sessions. We are also exploring the use of volunteers in both the homes and hospital to give parents and Locus Parentis a break, during virtual sessions.

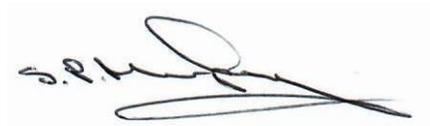
**Observation that we are on the right track:** Yesterday, we got a call from a therapist who was pulling a student from class virtually, it was great to see students all virtually attending classes at the same time, with their parents, 1-1 paraprofessionals, and the locus parentis in the hospital. It was also a ray of hope and normalcy for everyone to see a student excused from class for therapy, it was a beacon of light as we move forward to our shared goal. In regards to that goal, as soon as we have approval from the Somerset County Board of Education and have safe staffing levels we shall open up with our hybrid schedule. We are also looking forward to our 5 day-a-week goal in the Fall Semester.

**Summary:** Once again, we thank everyone who has come together to work on our shared goal. We thank the School Board Members, the Somerset County Executive Director's Office, the Department of Health, and all the hospital staff that have supported us this year and continue to offer their support. As we push forward on all fronts, we ask that if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions to email [mathenyschool@matheny.org](mailto:mathenyschool@matheny.org)

On Behalf of the School Community



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