

John F. Kennedy Middle School

ENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



JFK School Community,

We hope our October newsletter finds you and your family remaining healthy.

Our school year started with many uncertainties and a non-traditional schedule. The first weeks of school presented new challenges, which were met with creative solutions. It appears the students are settled in and have adjusted to this new mode of learning. Throughout this endeavor, our students have made their resilience apparent. They continue to push us to progress even further along the blended learning continuum. We are grateful for their ever-present curiosity to learn. We will continue to create meaningful learning opportunities that reinforce foundational knowledge, while scaffolding new skills and content. Additionally, we appreciate your continued support as the hybrid learning schedule has been extended to November 6. We feel and understand the challenges that households face in balancing ALL that comes with this model and in ensuring our students receive the very best. Working alongside the Enfield Board of Education, Superintendent Drezek will provide updates on our continued status in early November.

Before delving into school news and updates, I would like to take a moment to purposefully recognize our educators. Speaking from both my heart and observations, I want to extend my gratitude for ALL you have done to make this experience as meaningful and normal as possible for our students. We did not join this profession ever thinking of how we would teach students during a global pandemic. I am in awe of your fortitude, resolve, creativity, and the passion you have displayed in navigating these uncharted waters. I am honored and humbled to be a part of it. Your professional skills and collective efficacy created conditions that permitted us to offer educational programming to our community—thank you!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Berrios".

Andrew Berrios, Ed.D.
Principal

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Technology

At this point, we appear to have worked out most of our technology-related challenges. We learned a great deal in working through some of the unforeseen roadblocks, and we will continue to face new challenges as we delve further into the blended learning model. Whenever we are faced with a technical issue, please know we are working as fast as possible to develop a resolution. We appreciate your patience.

A few items worth mentioning:

1. The EPS-issued iPad should only utilize the EPS-issued email address for both Microsoft access and the iPad’s Apple ID (ex: jsmith@enfieldschools.org).
2. Students are asked not to share their device, password, or iPad pin with other students.
3. Please charge the device overnight for use during school hours.
4. Close all unused apps and lower display brightness to conserve battery life.
5. Please ensure your insurance is purchased and taken care of. We have already replaced several broken iPads.

We hope the device is serving your child well with their virtual learning experience.

Mental Health

The hybrid schedule and COVID restrictions have removed traditional interactions between faculty and students. We are unable to assess welfare, well-being, and emotional distress through conventional methodologies. You know your child better than we do. We want you to know that we are here for any social-emotional support that you may need for your child. We have an experienced and capable school counseling department that is ready and willing to assist where

necessary. If needed, you can identify your child’s counselor via their academic team ([Academic Teams](#)). Please reach out with any concerns or items you feel need our attention.

In addition to our school counseling professionals, you are welcome to access any of the following resources:

- [Community Health Center](#) (CHC). CHC is a great resource for many students new or returning to JFK. The middle school years may pose complex challenges for our developing students. CHC offers school-based mental health services to all our students, with both in-person and telehealth services offered. Please contact Eileen Adler, LCSW, if your student could benefit from counseling. Mrs. Adler can be reached at (860) 253-5447 or adlere@chc1.com.
- Mobile Crisis Intervention Services: 211
 - <https://www.211ct.org/>
- Healthy Lives Connecticut
 - <https://www.healthylivesct.org/>
- Gizmo’s Pawesome Guide to Mental Health
 - www.Gizmo4MentalHealth.org
- Crisis Text Line: Text “CT” to 741741
 - www.crisistextline.org
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)
 - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Attendance

For students who are physically in school, normal attendance practices and reporting will be applied. For students who are attending remotely, educators will take attendance at the beginning of the period and either mark students *remote present* or *absent*. For any remote learner who joins their Teams session after attendance has been taken, you will be considered late. If this is the case, we ask that an email be sent to the educator indicating that the student was indeed late. This email may come directly from the student or the parent/guardian. Once this is communicated, we will note this change from *absent* to *tardy present* in PowerSchool. Essentially, educators cannot effectively manage real-time attendance changes while simultaneously engaged in two modes of instruction, thus our decision to take attendance at the beginning of class and then place 100% of the focus on instruction and managing multiple digital platforms.

Please note that we run daily reports to determine who was present for their classes and who was not. Further, the report indicates the actual per minute duration of time the student was logged-in for class. Students who are not signed-in for the full length of their class session will not receive full credit for attending (unless *excused* by school personnel). Unfortunately, we have experienced students signing in for attendance and then promptly signing out; again, students will not receive attendance credit if this is the case. We will continue to monitor this situation and identify students who display erratic participation or are identified as truant. If your child is identified in these reports, we will communicate directly with you regarding the matter.

Per normal routine, any classroom time or school days that a student will not be in attendance must be communicated through the proper channels. If you expect your child to miss a class or school day due to an excusable reason, please communicate this information to your house administrative assistant (Red: mflynn@enfieldschools.org, White: cwhite@enfieldschools.org, Blue: dhavourd@enfieldschools.org – or call (860) 763-8855). We will ensure this information is marked as *excused* in our student information system.

Remote Learning Expectations

To remain consistent, we will adopt the same expectations as Enfield High School pertaining to remote learners. Whether at home or in the classroom, we expect our students to actively participate in the learning process. Remote learning requires students to take a larger amount of responsibility for their personal learning. We are hopeful that students understand and pursue the learning opportunities placed before them.

Please review the following expectations for the remote learning environment:

Active Participation: Students working from home are expected to actively participate in their learning. Remote students are able to achieve this in a variety of ways: completing assigned learning tasks and assessments, responding verbally to questions, and posting in the chat area when prompted. If students are not actively participating (completing coursework, responding to verbal comments, or posting in the chat when prompted), the teacher will contact the student's parents/guardians and, if necessary, will contact the Assistant Principal of the student regarding next steps.

Students only: Virtual classes are designed for students. While some students may need assistance with logging in, parents and guardians should not observe or actively participate in virtual classes. Siblings and other students not included in the class roster may not join a virtual class.

Privacy: Confidential or personally identifiable information related to students must not be collected, discussed, posted, or shared. Students should not record (video or audio), photograph, live stream, or transmit in any other way any part of a virtual class.

Appropriate Attire: Appropriate attire is expected from all participants while live-streaming.

Appropriate Behavior: Use chat only for appropriate, lesson-specific discussion. Student backgrounds and icons must be appropriate, respectful, and not distracting. Please be mindful of what is in view on the camera behind the participant. Utilize discretion when selecting your learning space. If this is not possible, please consider using the blur background feature within Teams (directions [HERE](#)).

Eliminating Background Noise: When possible, students are encouraged to use a headset or headphones (if this is something they own) while participating in videoconferencing, especially if located in a noisy space or shared space.

Cameras on, when required by the educator: Teachers may require students to activate their cameras during some aspects of live instruction. We recognize there may be reasons that some students are not able to turn on the camera (such as a weak Wi-Fi connection, privacy concerns, or personal reasons). In these cases, the student should reach out to the teacher for an exemption. Turning cameras on will assist our educators by improving social interactions and nurturing positive relationships in the classroom. It will also provide them the opportunity to verify attendance and monitor student engagement.

If there are extenuating circumstances where a student cannot turn their camera on, exemptions may be granted by the teacher. If a camera exemption is granted, students must demonstrate active engagement in other ways.

For students who would like their surroundings to remain private, there is an option to blur the background (directions [HERE](#)).

Whether we are in-person, remote, or in a hybrid model, our educators will continue to strive to engage students in meaningful and challenging learning experiences. Thank you for your attention and support with our learning expectations.

Open House and Teacher Conferences

We are in the process of developing an Open House informational video and arranging to host virtual Teacher Conferences. Our conferences are scheduled for November 18 (4:00-6:30 pm) and November 19 (6:00-8:30 pm). Once we have secured our scheduling tool, we will send you information on how to sign-up and schedule your meetings. We ask that you utilize your child's device and Microsoft365 login information to attend our Teams conferences. We will send more information in the coming weeks to ensure you are prepared and scheduled with your child's educators.

Picture Day

For hybrid students, your make-up picture day has been scheduled for Monday, November 9. Remote learners will be offered a picture day on Tuesday, November 3. This is election day and a professional learning day for educators. JFK will not serve as a polling station this year, and students are not attending classes due to the mentioned professional learning day scheduled for educators. We will offer pictures between 8 am and 2 pm; please come when it is convenient for you. A more detailed logistical overview will follow; however, we wanted to provide you the dates and time window so you can plan accordingly. The picture process will be organized to ensure COVID-related precautionary measures and safety remain the priority.

Enfield Public Schools Gear

Anyone interested in purchasing EPS gear, please visit <https://stadiumsystem.itemorder.com/> and enter Team Code: ENFIELD20.



Progress Reports and Report Cards

We are working to deliver progress reports and report cards digitally this year. These will be sent to your email address listed in PowerSchool. We are working to have these tabs added to your PowerSchool sidebar. Please note that these will be fully functional with site access. We are unsure about app access at this moment, but plan to explore it further.

We understand this mode of learning is an adjustment for everyone. Furthermore, we recognize that assigned grades may cause concern when progress reports are distributed. We ask that you sit down with your child to ensure effective routines are in-place and that all academic submissions are turned in. Educators will remain *reasonably* accommodating for late submissions and in accepting assignments; however, this is the time to resolve discrepancies and ensure all work is submitted. Term 1 Report Cards are fast approaching, please get ahead of the November 13 grade closure date.

Virtual Clubs

JFK is excited to offer several after-school virtual clubs to our students. The following offerings will be available to students this fall. Students will be sent a form to sign-up for any of the below listed clubs within our MS Teams platform. The meeting times and days will be listed within the form they will receive.

| CLUB | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Rachel's Challenge | The Rachel's Challenge club at JFK follows "The mission of Rachel's Challenge which is to equip and empower students and adults to sustain a positive culture change in their schools and communities by starting a chain reaction of kindness and compassion." Throughout the school year, we will organize events to promote a positive culture and recognize individuals for demonstrating kindness and compassion. – Mrs. Beebe and Mrs. Fitzgerald |
| Student Council | As a member of Student Council, you will work to create a better school and community. You will have a chance to have your voice heard and will be able to participate in school-wide fundraisers to benefit JFK and Enfield at large. 8th grade officers will be elected, which includes the roles of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. All students (6th – 8th grade) are welcome to join! |
| JFK Drama Club | In this club, students will be able to perform a variety of songs and dances from different Broadway musicals. We will work together to create a way to show this virtually! |
| JFK Diversity Club | The Diversity Club is a place where you can talk with other students in a comfortable and safe environment on issues such as race and gender. We will be meeting virtually on Teams; come with an open mind and heart. Everyone is welcome! |
| Literary Magazine/Creative Writing Club | The Creative Writing Club provides a space for students to come and learn strategies and techniques to strengthen their writing. Students will participate in creative writing prompts and will also have the opportunity to generate their own original writing with support from |

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| | <p>their peers and club advisors. We also produce the literary magazine in this club. The magazine is a collection of student writing, artwork, and photography. Members of the Creative Writing Club will be actively involved in the publication of the literary magazine.</p> |
| Get Fit for a Cause | <p>The Get Fit for a Cause is a club that combines doing good for the community and staying fit. Students train for and fundraise to participate in 5K walks/runs whose proceeds benefit the community. They learn the value of working towards a fitness goal and a community service goal. This year, our club will meet virtually on Wednesdays. Advisors will post workouts, set fitness goals with students, and post information about virtual races.</p> |
| Scale Model Club | <p>The JFK Scale Model Club will be virtual this year! We will share building, painting, and weathering tips, as well as show our latest work! You can build anything you wish in any scale: cars, figures, Sci-Fi, planes, ships, armor... (You are responsible for purchasing your kits and supplies). A Microsoft TEAM will be set up with members! Let's build!!!</p> |
| JFK Debate Team | <p>Join the debate team! We meet virtually and debate topics that are current. Meeting days are every other Wednesday. Tournaments are on Saturdays and will be announced as they are scheduled.</p> |
| JFK French Club | <p>Are you interested in learning more about French culture? Why do French people have that "Je ne sais quoi?" Are you interested in learning more about French food? Did you know there is a crepes museum in Quimper. France in Butter Square (Place au Beurre)!! Hmmm...Let's visit that museum!</p> <p>Are you interested in learning more about French music? This is the place!</p> <p>Did you ever want to visit Paris? Well you can, virtually! We can climb the Eiffel Tower together and roam through the Louvre Museum and just browse the farmer's market for our dinner tonight!</p> |