

# SOUTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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May 13, 2020

Dear Students and Families,

Placement is an intricate process in a normal year, let alone with the impact of remote learning. Our professionals make serious decisions each year to place children in the best learning environments possible and do so with the best intentions for each and every child. With the last three months of school being remote and with limited ability to grade with fidelity, it is important to assess the impact on the loss of grading and the criteria we normally have available. Although this is not business as usual, we are taking this year's placement process as seriously as we do in any other year.

We must look at both the opportunities this situation has provided, as well as the challenges. Whether we are looking at placement criteria for advancement or for remediation, the way in which we approach each decision must be framed with the understanding of our situation and the impact it has had on each student's ability to demonstrate their strengths. Combining the issues of equity and the potential loss of learning over this time must all be considered.

We will have to balance perception and the typical drive for more and advancement, with what we know to be good for kids. Here are some questions we have had to ponder as we approach the many facets of student/class placement.

- What, if anything, will need to change to our current practice and process?
- How does not having a traditional final grade impact placements where prerequisites are tied directly to a specific GPA?
- How do we account for the final ¼ of the year when considering placement (in or out) of programs such as ELL, Instructional Support or G&T?
- Is this an opportunity to give students who were on the cusp a chance at the next level?
- Is there a way to assess students in those pivotal areas where the information is paramount to the decision?
- Which placements are time-sensitive, and which have time to marinate?

Whatever answers we provide, we must consider students first. We must take into account the chaos and loss associated with what we are all going through and will be going through for an unknown time longer. This is extreme and the answers cannot be as simple as we want them to be. We have to break from our norms and look for solutions that encompass what we know and then those things that we just can't know right now.

As we built out each component of this, we tried to stay away from absolutes. Decisions had to be flexible and had to consider the *benefit of the doubt*. We have to build upon existing waiver systems and leave open the possibility for the need to move students up or down levels at a later date. The reality is that there will be a great deal of unknowns, from whether we will be back in school in September to how gaping a chasm some of our students are in as a result of all this. Placement needs to happen now and we

will need to stand by our decisions, while making sure they are fair, kids first and pliable enough to handle uncertainty.

We are approaching this in a similar manner that we did grading - by level.

Access for students to opportunities and for the support they need is crucial, and the situation requires us to address critical decisions while in a state of complete flux and uncharted waters. What we can't do is believe we have all of the answers; we don't. But we do have our experiences and what we know of our programs and our students. **With that we can do our best to ensure we do nothing to hurt a child, deny a child something they should have, or discount these crazy times.**

Below are links to each level which outline the necessary placement concepts and protocols for the coming year.

[Elementary and Middle School](#)

[High School](#)

Thank you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'S' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott