



HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mr. Michael McElduff, Superintendent of Schools

Thursday, May 30, 2024

Dear Community Members, Faculty, and Staff,

I am writing to provide an important update regarding our Capital Project, which was generously approved by the community in March 2023. This \$44 million initiative aims to enhance the facilities across all three of our school buildings.

Project Overview and Current Status:

At James I. O'Neill High School, we have planned a new roof and a complete renovation of the kitchen. This kitchen is a crucial hub as it prepares meals for students not only at the high school but across the district. Highland Falls Intermediate School is also set for a roof repair and a brand new parking lot. Both JIO and HFIS will receive HVAC updates including air conditioning.

The Fort Montgomery Elementary School (FMES) has been the primary focus of this project. FMES urgently needs additional classroom spaces to provide a fully functional Art and Library Media center and space for our faculty to serve our student needs in a more meaningful way. The project also plans to address the lack of parking for visitors. Inside the FMES, improvements will include a new nurse's office, a safety vestibule, renovations to ensure our washrooms are ADA compliant, and additional storage. Furthermore, there will be a new extension at the rear of the building that will house a new gym and cafeteria. FMES will also be upgraded with new HVAC systems, including air conditioning.

In late October 2023, the district submitted all required documentation to the State Education Department (SED) for the FMES project review. As of today, May 30, 2024, we have not yet received approval. The district has been proactive in communicating with SED and has solicited support from local legislators to advocate on our behalf, but progress has been slow. Our district, like others in NYS, is dependent on the SED approval process.

In order to adhere to budgetary constraints and project deadlines, it was imperative to initiate construction during the summer of 2024, as substantial staging and rock removal were necessary at the onset. Regrettably, a delay from the SED (State Education Department) carries considerable consequences. Failure to commence the project in 2024 may result in escalating costs, inflation, and heightened labor expenses amounting to an additional \$750,000 or more.

In light of these challenges, the district has made the difficult decision to temporarily close Fort Montgomery Elementary School for the 2024-2025 school year. This decision, though challenging, will enable us to begin the project in late August, pending SED approval and aim for completion by August 2025. The goal is to have the Fort Montgomery Elementary School open and fully operational for the 2025-2026 school year.

Consequently, the district will relocate students as follows for the 2024-2025 school year:

- Highland Falls Intermediate School will serve **Pre-K through 6th grade**.
- James I. O'Neill High School will accommodate students in grades **7-12**.

These changes will be in effect for **one school year only**. This is a substantial undertaking, and our faculty, staff, and administrative team are committed to ensuring a smooth transition. Over the three months, we will release transition updates to address any questions or concerns. The first update will be sent out on the afternoon of Friday, June 14th. If you have questions or concerns, we ask that you email them to capitalproject24-25@hffmcsd.org. In addition, we have provided an FAQ page regarding the relocation on the district's website. I encourage everyone to read the FAQ page before posing a question or concern, as there is a lot of information on this document and will continually be updated. Please visit www.hffmcsd.org and click on Capital Project 24-25 under Quick Links.

End-of-Year Schedule Adjustments:

In order to efficiently manage this significant task, it is essential that we begin classroom packing for our faculty and staff prior to the end of the current school year. We have scheduled six half-days at the conclusion of the school year for both FMES and HFIS. **Lunch will be provided for all students in grades PreK-8 except on June 26th.** The specific dates and times for the half-days are outlined below:

- Monday, June 17th
- Tuesday, June 18th
- Friday, June 21st
- Monday, June 24th
- Tuesday, June 25th
 - Pre-K 11:00 am
 - K-8 11:30 am
- *****Wednesday, June 26th*** (last day of school)**
 - Pre-K 10:00 am
 - K-8 10:30 am

We acknowledge that these adjustments may result in additional challenges for families, and we sincerely apologize for any disruption it may bring. We appreciate your understanding and support as we navigate this complex but necessary process to improve our school facilities for the benefit of our students and community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Michael McElduff

Superintendent of Schools