



**TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOLS**  
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To our Toms River Regional Schools staff, parents, and families:

As we prepare for the next phase of our [#TRSafeReturn](#) tomorrow, I'd like to take this time to provide more details about our desk dividers, and to address some concerns which have been expressed.

Full lexan barriers were ordered long before we surveyed parents to select and update their child's learning model, and in anticipation of and preparation for the advancement of in-person learning. Once we received the updated data, which revealed 80 percent of students had selected in-person learning (with many classrooms at 100 percent), we needed to prepare for a reasonable goal of securing desk dividers for at least 70 percent of our classrooms. While many districts are not providing such barriers, we felt that this additional layer of protection was warranted to assist in areas where we cannot maintain social distancing.

Two variations of student desk barriers were secured, with each presenting challenges. While we're disappointed in the limited selection available through approved New Jersey co-op vendors, we're also pleased to be able to offer this added level of protection. The final decision to purchase each barrier was based upon how each version would fit the various needs of our different desktops; student heights; cleaning procedures; and would adapt to our varying classroom environments. While no student desk shield is perfect, our hope is that these barriers are a temporary means to an end as COVID-19 numbers continue to decline within our area, and restrictions can gradually be removed from our learning environments. Below are several clarifying points we would like our school community to keep in mind:

- An initial purchase of 1,000 barriers was placed to provide an additional layer in areas where social distancing may have posed a concern during our initial return phases. Once parents had the opportunity to switch their child's learning model, it was determined that an additional 13,000 barriers were needed to implement an expanded layer of protection.
- Both barriers purchased are commonly used by neighboring districts and were selected as per their availability and participation in New Jersey and national co-op. The district moved forward with placing the lexan barriers (clear on all sides) in three of our schools with a high level of return to in-person learning.
- The full lexan barrier presented concerns such as glare and varying durability issues, and it was decided that the larger purchase should be made for white desk shields with the lexan panel.
- Both styles of barriers limit students' full range of vision within the classroom; therefore, classroom arrangements will be flexible to accommodate maximum visibility for all individuals.
- The white student desk shields with the lexan panel offers the flexibility we will need as we continue to be fluid through the health crisis.
- Below are photos of both desk shields-- clear on all sides, and white with the lexan panel:



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While some parents have offered to or expressed an interest in purchasing a barrier for their own child, please note that these must be approved for classroom use. ***Please refrain from purchasing a desk barrier for your child at this time.***

Throughout this process of safely returning to in-person learning, the district has tried to remain as transparent and flexible as possible, and the same is true here. We continue to examine our desk divider needs, and input from staff, students, and parents will help drive our decision making.

Additionally, we continue to offer a full-virtual model for students and families with any underlying concerns. We have, however, been encouraged by how many students have selected in-person learning, and we believe this is a testament to our continued and tireless efforts to provide as safe an environment as possible. We are excited to welcome our elementary students back to four days of in-person instruction tomorrow and we eagerly anticipate the return of our secondary students in the coming weeks. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

Regards,

*Thomas Gialanella*

Thomas Gialanella  
Interim Superintendent of Schools

TG/tmd