



**NJ21United Before Reopening Schools**  
**A Call to Action!**

**Remote learning during COVID-19 has shone a bright light on the inequity and shortfalls within our public education system; inequities that have always existed, but are now even more apparent. To advocate for our students and communities in this time, there are some areas that need to be examined immediately before we, as educators, agree to return to our schools. Now is the time for us to come together and have these conversations within our union spaces, to create a united front that can push solutions to these issues to the forefront.**

**After six weeks of conversations and analysis, NJ21United has identified these seven topics that demand immediate attention and offer a starting point for long-term organizing:**

- **Effective Health and Safety Protocols**
  - Strong standards of cleaning with proper personal protection equipment for custodial staff, hand sanitizer in each classroom, soap and hot water, or antibacterial soap in all buildings.
  - Adequate ventilation and safe building and room temperatures. Students, faculty, and staff held harmless from attendance requirements when displaying symptoms of Covid-19.
  - More counselors and mental health resources for students, families, and staff, including at least one school counselor and one school nurse in every school building
- **District-based Team Decision-making**
  - A collaboration of a team of educators, support staff, parents, admin, and superintendent to plan what schools will look like upon reopening and beyond. This should include conversations about class size, staggered schedules, schedule adjustments, transportation adjustments, etc.
- **Establish/Increase Trauma Informed Practices and Services**
  - Mandate districts to provide comprehensive professional development on trauma informed practices to all school staff, and educators.



- Hold Harmless Policies for Grading and Assessment
  - Review and replace current grading policies that measure privilege and socio-economic status. The collective recognition about how grades are the backbone of privilege in school, both as a way of labeling students and how to make decisions about access to opportunity has been forced upon us. It's time to end this practice.
  - A halt to standardized testing - we are fine without it this year and need other ways to assess students with fidelity, not based on socio-economic status
  
- Support for our Students with Special Needs and Address Learning Regression for All
  - Districts will place extra emphasis on the need to address learning regression and gaps in our classified population when planning budgets, resources and student placements upon reopening. Including increased accountability measures for IEP compliance and professional development for classroom paraprofessionals that lead to credentialing and pay increases that are funded through district and state partnerships.
  
- Protections Against Austerity Budget Measures
  - A moratorium on non-renewal, or failure to rehire our support staff - these are community members that will need employment and benefits. A "Chop at the Top" analysis should be done to determine where positions at administrative and supervisory levels overlap. Essential employees and staff that have a daily impact on students should not be cut.
  - No cuts to performing arts/creative art programs. Creative arts have been a lifeline in time of quarantine. Cuts to these programs will further harm students.
  - An analysis by districts to re-establish in-house services that have been privatized in the past. Districts without services, such as transportation, etc. did not have access to resources that would have better allowed us to assist our families during quarantine.
  
- Forward Steps in Creating Broadband Internet as a Regulated Public Utility

**We know that there are long-term issues that fall outside of the scope of this list that still need to be addressed. But in this time of triage for health and safety, emphasis must be placed on what needs to be dealt with first, in order to reopen our schools in a manner that will be safe for all students and staff.**