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## **New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$24,000 to Freehold School District to Close the Digital Divide**

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide \$24,000 to the Freehold school district for Wi-Fi connectivity to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Freehold is one of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Bridgeton, Millville, Red Bank, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

“In today’s world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. “We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic.”

Freehold’s funding will cover the cost of 100 hotspots currently in use for the last 6 months of the ‘20-21 school year and 50 new hotspots for an entire year of service.

"Freehold Borough is very grateful to the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund for helping the district offset the costs of Internet connectivity for our students. This has allowed us to fully connect all of our students to the Internet so that they can have fully robust virtual learning experiences during this time of unexpected disruptions due to COVID-19. On behalf of our students, we thank the leaders of the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund for this timely and targeted financial assistance."

The decision by many districts across the state to move to remote or hybrid learning has exposed a “digital divide” between students in wealthier districts who have devices and broadband internet access and those in poorer districts who do not. Without access, students in districts that have gone remote are at a major disadvantage.

The state has provided \$45 million to public school districts to buy digital devices and internet connectivity, but nearly 40,000 students across the state are still without a device or internet connectivity or both, according to the state Department of Education.

NJPRF CEO Josh Weinreich said the fund reached out to many districts to ascertain their needs and directed its donations to some of the state’s most underprivileged districts, where the need far outstripped available funding.



“This is another great example of NJPRF channeling the energy and resources of New Jersey to fill in the gaps and ensure every child has the equipment and access they need so that their education is not interrupted,” Weinreich said.



## **New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$637,000 to Bridgeton and Millville School Districts to Close the Digital Divide**

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide more than \$637,000 to Bridgeton and Millville public schools to help students stay connected during the remote learning.

Bridgeton and Millville are two of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Freehold, Red Bank, Passaic, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

“In today’s world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. “We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic.”

Millville will receive \$392,268 for 291 laptops equipped with Windows operating systems, high-end processors and more memory for students enrolled in career and technical education courses.

“Millville Public Schools (MPS) will now be closer to closing one facet of the digital divide because of the NJPRF grant,” said Millville Schools Superintendent Tony Trongone. “MPS is a school district with 75% of students economically disadvantaged. Our educators can now focus our efforts away from device acquisition and towards digital content and virtual pedagogy. We are forever thankful to the NJPRF in meeting the needs of all our children.”

Bridgeton will receive \$245,000 to purchase 400 Dell laptops fully loaded for student use and funding for five months of T-Mobile hotspot service.

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## **New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$53,300 to Old Bridge Public Schools to Close the Digital Divide**

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide \$187,000 to the Old Bridge Public Schools to help students stay connected during the remote learning.

Old Bridge is one of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Bridgeton, Freehold, Millville, Passaic, Red Bank and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

“In today’s world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. “We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic.”

Old Bridge’s funding will allow the district to purchase 6 1/2 months of internet connectivity through Altice for the remainder of the school year.

"In Old Bridge, I feel we are so fortunate to have partnered with NJPRF. The resources they have provided monetarily will mean the difference between continuous Learning and instructional gaps in service for our neediest populations," Old Bridge Superintendent David Cittadino said.

“I speak for an entire community when I say how much we appreciate those generous individuals in from the state, the business community and those amazing philanthropists that made this possible,” Cittadino said.

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## **New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$73,000 Passaic School District to Close the Digital Divide**

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide \$73,200 to the Passaic City school district to help special education students connect to remote learning.

Passaic is one of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Bridgeton, Freehold, Millville, Red Bank, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

“In today’s world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. “We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic.”

Passaic’s funding will allow the district to purchase 200 touchscreen Chromebooks for special education students, who are currently using a random collection of devices that are not well-suited for this population’s needs and which makes teaching in a uniform way incredibly challenging.

“COVID-19 has presented significant challenges for districts all around the State of New Jersey, to provide the most up-to-date equipment for our students to learn in a home-based, remote learning environment,” said Passaic Schools Superintendent Pablo Muñoz.

“That is why we are truly gratified that the NJPRF has earmarked funds for the purchase of 200 touchscreen Chromebooks to service special education students,” Muñoz said. “All children deserve our highest level of support and dedication. That commitment is truly highlighted by this much needed contribution from the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund.”

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## **New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$187,000 to Red Bank Borough Public Schools to Close the Digital Divide**

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide \$187,000 to the Red Bank Borough Public Schools to help students stay connected during the remote learning.

Red Bank is one of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Bridgeton, Freehold, Millville, Passaic, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

“In today’s world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity,” said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. “We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic.”

Red Bank’s funding will allow the district to purchase 250 touch-screen Chromebooks for preschool students and 250 Chromebooks for K-8 students.

“We are grateful and at the same time ecstatic for the financial support of the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund in order to help bridge the digital divide for our students,” said Red Bank Borough Public Schools Superintendent Jared J. Ramage.

“Equitable access to updated technology and connectivity opens a whole new world for our students and enables them to be exposed to new opportunities and learning experiences,” Ramage said. “We have some of the most talented and resilient children in America and with this grant, we can ensure all Red Bank Borough Public School students have the capability to connect with our staff and continue to dream big.”

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