



St. Mary's County Public Schools
Central Administration

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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

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Dear SMCPs Families:

As we conclude March and look forward to a well-earned spring break, I would like to take a moment to say thank you to all our teachers, support staff, students, and parents for working together to make hybrid learning happen. Because everyone has been following health and safety guidelines, we have had few students or staff test positive for COVID-19 and there has been no interruption of instruction or a need to modify our plan. This past month has given us hope that we are moving in the right direction.

On Friday, March 19, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised the guidance to schools regarding physical distancing of students to a minimum of three (3) feet under certain circumstances. Complete updated guidelines can be found on the CDC website by following this [link](#). These new guidelines will allow us to expand in-person instruction in the fourth quarter of this year and allow some students to attend four days each week. The revised guidelines permit masked students in elementary classrooms to be within three (3) feet of each other and provides enhanced guidance for middle and high schools. At all grade levels, when students are not wearing a mask, such as when eating lunch, they should maintain six (6) feet of social distance. With this new guidance, we will begin offering in-person instruction four days a week for targeted groups of students. Beginning Monday, April 12, 2021, the following groups of students will be able to attend classes Monday-Thursday:

- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Homeless students
- Students who are failing more than two core classes

Over the next two weeks, school teams will identify these specific students and communicate directly with those families. All other students will remain in the Hybrid (A/B-day) schedule. Please take a few minutes to respond to [this brief survey](#), which will help us plan for the number of families interested in expanding in-person learning or who intend to remain virtual. As guidance from the CDC is updated, our plans will be modified accordingly.

As we end the third quarter and begin the final marking period of the year, it is essential that students who have struggled with virtual learning fully consider returning to in-person instruction. Our data reflects less COVID-19 transmission in our schools than in the community and we have seen improved engagement of students once they re-enter the classroom. There is time remaining this school year to recover failed grades, so students need to take advantage of the recovery options offered by their teachers. Information about the SMCPs summer recovery program will be communicated during the 4th marking period for students who are unable to recover during the traditional school year.

We are thankful for the patience and understanding of the community. Our students and staff have been steadfast in following our safety protocols, which allows us to take these next hopeful steps and prepare for a return to normal schedules next year. Please take a few minutes to watch the Superintendent's Update provided at the [Wednesday, March 24, 2021](#), Board of Education meeting for further information.

I hope you find time to relax and recharge during Spring Break and I look forward to taking these next steps together.

With appreciation,


J. Scott Smith, Ed.D.,
Superintendent of Schools

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