



An Important Message from the Superintendent

January 1, 2021

SCPS Families,

I sincerely hope that you have experienced a safe, peaceful, and rewarding winter break. As we prepare to begin our second semester of this truly challenging and unprecedented school year, I want to again express a huge depth of gratitude for your continued dedication to and support of our mission.

At the start of our winter break, we had every intention of staying our current course to begin the second semester. For the past two weeks, as throughout this entire crisis, we have continued to monitor and evaluate key metrics and indicators that include external health metrics balanced with the impact of COVID-19 cases on our capacity to effectively mitigate conditions and operate the hybrid model with our existing staff resources. In addition, we have communicated with regional health officials regarding whether changes in these metrics and conditions necessitate any changes in course.

This letter is intended to notify you of changes to our instructional delivery mode we will need to implement in beginning the new semester (Monday, January 4th), as well as the rationale for those changes at this time. In communication with school board leadership, the board members have indicated their support of this instructional model decision.

SCPS will begin the second semester, starting on Monday, January 4th and continuing through Friday, January 15th in a distance/virtual learning mode. We will follow our current Monday-Friday schedule for synchronous and asynchronous learning. SCPS will continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on our school system.

It is important to note that during this time the following will be in effect:

- **The Early Childhood Special Education Programs will take place virtually**
- **No bus transportation will be provided except for students who participate in Special Education Low Incident Programs**

- **Buildings will be open for students who participate in Special Education Low Incident Programs and for any student needing internet access**
- **Food distribution will be provided for students who are in the building for instruction and the [Wednesday food distribution at 18 sites will take place as scheduled](#)**
- **All athletic activities will continue as planned**

The following information represents the rationale for beginning the first two weeks of the second semester in a virtual mode.

- Both of the indicators that we have been monitoring for Spotsylvania County remain in the highest risk category.
 - Since our last in-person learning day before break our cases per 100,000 has grown from just under 500 to over 600. It has almost tripled since Thanksgiving.
 - Our positivity rate is among the highest in our Health District, at over 14%. This is up from just over 11% prior to winter break. Since Thanksgiving, this rate has grown by about 6%.
- Prior to and continuing through the break, our operational capacity has steadily decreased due to the impact of student and staff exposure to COVID-19. Increasing numbers of our staff are having to quarantine due to exposure and this significantly impacts the sufficient delivery of services in the hybrid model. Over the break, more than 50 employees have already had to quarantine due to contact tracing or being a positive COVID-19 case.
 - Given the developments and continued surge in the virus and our limited capacity in staffing based on numbers of students and staff currently (and expected to be) positive or quarantined, the reprieve from in-person learning for the two-week period was made in consultation with the Acting Director of the Region 16 Health District, Dr. Denise Bonds. [Her statement is included here.](#)

These latest combined factors - the number of quarantined staff over break and anticipated to be quarantined in the coming days, the significant increase of the number of cases, and the continued increase of the County's positivity rate - are the reasons we have made the decision to move to the distance/virtual learning mode through January 15, 2021. Please know that it is not a decision that was made lightly, we understand that this may create hardships for some of

our families and staff. Above all, we remain committed to supporting our students and valued stakeholders.

Thank you for your support and patience as we work through this complex and fluid situation. Wishing everyone a safe year ahead!

Sincerely,
Dr. S. Scott Baker