



**St. Mary's County Public Schools  
Central Administration**

**Office of the Superintendent**  
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**Dr. J. Scott Smith**  
Superintendent

December 31, 2020

Dear SMCPs Families:

We hope everyone has had a restful winter break. As instruction resumes on Monday, January 4, 2021, we will continue with online instruction for all students. Our hope was that our community health metrics would improve to a point to begin our return to in-person instruction. Unfortunately, we continue to see high numbers of positive COVID-19 cases, and the new case rate of 26 per 100,000 and 16% positive of all those tested are well beyond the threshold for in-person instruction to resume. In addition, following the [Maryland Health Advisory](#) announced by Governor Hogan on December 17, group size limits of 10 or fewer people challenges our ability to bring back students. We are anxious to bring our students back; however, the community spread of COVID-19 prevents us from moving forward.

We can see the light at the end of this long tunnel. Over the last two weeks, the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) began their local vaccination efforts, with the first doses provided for local health care workers - including some of our own school nurses who have volunteered to help administer the vaccine. We will provide an overview of the St. Mary's County Health Department's vaccination program at our next Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at 5 PM, before our public hearing on the budget. We encourage you to tune in. You can view the Board meeting on our website at [www.smcps.org/streaming](http://www.smcps.org/streaming) or our [YouTube channel](#).

We remain committed to returning students to in-person learning and are confident that in-person instruction will resume for the second semester of this school year. Please know that as we begin 2021, data and decisions made outside the school system will be driving our timeline - which includes when vaccinations will be made available for frontline school staff.

For the month of January, we will work closely with our teachers, support professionals, and administrators to determine how and when special populations of students may be brought back safely into our schools and our student athletes may return to begin the winter season. More information will follow as it is made available to us.

Meal distribution for students will continue at all school sites according to the regular schedule: 11 AM- 1 PM on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

2021 brings hope. Hope for health and hope for overcoming this persistent challenge we have faced in 2020. As we close 2020, we wish everyone a safe and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Smith, Ed.D.  
Superintendent