



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

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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

August 11, 2021

Dear St. Mary's County Public Schools Families:

We are so excited to welcome our students back for the 2021-2022 school year! On Monday, August 30, 2021, our doors will open to our students with a normal schedule and face-to-face instruction, five days a week. Please be sure to visit our website, www.smcps.org, for our [Back to School](#) resources page that includes information about school open houses, school supply lists, transportation, and school lunches, as well as direct links to each school's website.

Over this last year and a half, we have had to do things like never before - delivering instruction, support, and even food in new and creative ways. We learned a lot and could not be more proud of the way our students, teachers, and all those who support them came together to solve each new problem. Our ultimate goal has always been the same - to get all our kids back in school five days a week - and we will do just that on August 30th when we will fully open with a normal in-person schedule.

With the health and safety of our students and staff underpinning our work, we will continue to incorporate the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD). We regularly communicate with SMCHD and review the St. Mary's County community health metrics - specifically focusing on local community transmission levels of COVID. On July 30, the CDC provided guidance and set four levels of community transmission based on new weekly cases per 100,000: low (0-9), moderate (10-49), substantial (50-99), or high (100+). This guidance, coupled with recommendations from SMCHD, provide us important information for decision making.

With the return to in-person instruction, we know that the question about wearing masks in schools is on everyone's mind. As I shared during the [August 11, 2021, Board of Education meeting](#), St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) will make bi-weekly decisions using two weeks of community health data, as posted on the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) [Local COVID-19 Data dashboard](#) website. SMCPS will follow the CDC Indicators and Thresholds for Community Transmission of COVID-19 to determine the SMCPS Indoor Masking Requirement.

- When community transmission is *high*, masks are *required* for all individuals, regardless of vaccination status.
- When community transmission is *substantial*, masks are *required* for individuals who are not fully vaccinated.
- When community transmission is *low or moderate*, masks are *recommended* for individuals who are not fully vaccinated

Indicator	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Total new cases (PCR or antigen positive) per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9	10-49	50-99	100+
SMCPS Indoor Masking Requirement	Masks recommended for individuals not fully vaccinated		Masks required for individuals not fully vaccinated	Masks required for all regardless of vaccination

Data for the previous two weeks will be reviewed *and announced* for protocols that will be in place for the following two weeks. **Beginning Monday, August 16, 2021, Face coverings/masks are required indoors at all SMCPS buildings.** If the current level of community transmission remains high, we will begin the school year with an indoor mask requirement for everyone, regardless of vaccination status.

Masking requirements apply to all SMCPS *indoor settings*. State and federal guidance requires that masks are required on all school buses, regardless of vaccination status. *For outdoor activities*, masking is not required but those not fully vaccinated are strongly recommended to do so. SMCPS will allow the following exceptions when facemasks may be *removed indoors*:

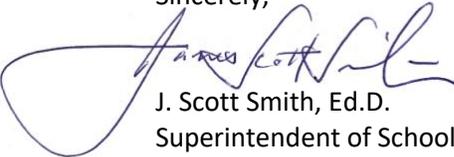
- When actively eating or drinking.
- When presenting to a group, and the group is masked.
- When actively engaged in a sporting or athletic event (e.g., on the court); however, masks would be worn when not actively participating.
- When on stage for a performance, and during the performance itself; however, masks would be worn when not actively participating (e.g., masks would be worn backstage or off stage).

Further details will be provided based on the instructional activity or as appropriate to the circumstance. Masking - especially indoors - provides additional levels of protection that will help us to maintain our full, in-person schedule in the safest way possible. We will also continue our cleaning protocols, hand sanitizer stations, and regular hand washing to maintain clean and healthy environments.

As we move forward, our decisions and actions will always put our students first. We are hopeful that as the summer winds down our community transmission rate will decline, and we encourage anyone who is eligible to receive a vaccine to do so. The St. Mary's County Health Department is offering ongoing vaccination clinics, which can be found on their website - smchd.org/covid-19-vaccine.

We are looking forward to a great school year and we are grateful for our exceptional community dedicated to our students. We are all in this together, and we are so thrilled to fully open our doors to all students on Monday, August 30, for the new school year.

Sincerely,



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