



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

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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

December 18, 2020

Dear SMCPs Families:

As 2020 nears its end, we want to thank you for your patience and support throughout this first part of the school year. We have all been working through the most challenging time in public education and we have done so together and remain undaunted. For all the obstacles facing us, teachers and students have pushed forward and made the best of our virtual learning environment. Moreover, they have done so with creativity, care, and commitment. While we have all honed our technology skills, you have helped immeasurably with encouragement and advocacy for your children. It is humbling how much this community draws together to meet challenges.

While schools are closed for winter break, we will continue to watch our local health metrics. We are all anxious for our students to return to the classroom, but the spread of COVID-19 continues in our community. For the past four weeks we have seen an even higher number of cases and double-digit positivity rates.

We see the toll it takes and the extended fatigue that comes with the restrictions this virus has placed on all of us. We are also hopeful-- hopeful that we will all take heed of the health safety recommendations and hopeful we will all enjoy this holiday break safely so our students can return to our buildings.

As announced this month, our plan is to resume in-person instruction in January, beginning January 4 with students in special programs (SAIL and COMPASS), then phasing in other students for hybrid instruction over the coming weeks. In addition, students in athletics and after school programs will resume, following continued safety protocols. With this optimistic timeline in mind, we will continue to use our local health data as the gatekeeper. If we need to alter this plan, we will announce any changes by December 31, 2020.

Throughout the break, we know there are students who continue to be in need. Meals will be provided for our students on Monday, December 21, and Monday, December 28, from 11 AM to 1 PM. Winter Meal Pickup will include five days worth of meals and will be available at many locations: Lettie Marshall Dent Elementary, Dynard Elementary, Margaret Brent Middle, Oakville Elementary, Evergreen Elementary, Banneker Elementary, Leonardtown High School, Ridge Elementary, Piney Point Elementary, Lexington Park Elementary, and Spring Ridge Middle School. Although not required, to assist with planning meal counts please let us know you are coming by completing this online form: <https://bit.ly/WinterBreakMeals2020>

Over the next two weeks, we will step back, rest, reflect, and recharge. Our students, staff, and families have earned a well-deserved winter break - so please do just that. 2021 will bring us out of this dark time and light our way with hope. I know that we will end this school year gathering together stronger than ever - and I can't wait.

Yours in hope,



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