



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

Office of the Superintendent
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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

January 22, 2021

Dear SMCPs Families:

Throughout the fall, St. Mary's County Public Schools has followed the [COVID-19 Guidance for Maryland Schools](#) published by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to drive our decision making. The document set specific metrics for reopening schools and bringing students back for in-person learning. Yesterday, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, Acting Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services Jinlene Chan, M.D., and Maryland State Superintendent Karen Salmon, held a press conference calling on all Maryland public schools to return for hybrid in-person instruction by March 1. A new document entitled [Maryland School Reopening Guidance](#) has been posted to the Maryland State Department of Education website this morning to guide reopening efforts which contains no reference to COVID community spread data impacting decisions to open schools for in-person learning.

St. Mary's County Public Schools has remained committed to returning students to classrooms safely and our schools are prepared with health and safety protocols for their return. Moreover, over the last two weeks, SMCPs has worked closely with the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) to provide opportunities for all our staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. These safety measures have put us in position to meet the expectations expressed by Governor Hogan and State Superintendent Salmon. We will be implementing our phased return plan for students throughout the month of February, with all students having the option for hybrid in-person learning by Monday, March 1, 2021.

Please tune in to the Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, January 27, 2021, beginning at 6:00 p.m. for a detailed presentation of the process and timeline for our phased [Safe Return to School](#) plan. You can view the Board meeting online at www.smcps.org/streaming, or on the [SMCPs YouTube channel](#). Following the Board meeting, we will follow up with a letter to families providing additional information.

Sincerely,

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