



St. Mary's County Public Schools Central Administration

Office of the Superintendent
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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

January 28, 2021

Dear SMCPs Families:

It has been nearly a year since our halls were filled with the energetic presence of our full student body. Online instruction, Schoology lessons, and interactive Google Meets led by creative and caring teachers have kept learning alive. We also know that the experience of school goes beyond an instructional lesson. The connections between students, the connections with staff, and the relationships that are forged strengthen both students' understanding of the content and their overall social and emotional growth. Bringing students back to in-person instruction helps us to move forward with connecting the academic and social/emotional needs of our students.

Last evening, during the [Board of Education meeting](#), I shared our timeline for returning students and staff to our schools. Following our [Safe Return to School Plan](#), SMCPs will follow a phased approach to return for hybrid in-person instruction.

- **Phase 1**, which includes students in **special programs** (i.e., SAIL and COMPASS), will return on **Monday, February 8, 2021**.
- **Phase 2**, which includes students in **Head Start, Pre-K, K, and Grades 1, 6, 9, and 12**, will return on **Tuesday, February 16, 2021**. *All Head Start and Pre-K classes will follow an AM/PM schedule for social distancing purposes.*
- **Phase 3**, which includes students in **all remaining grades**, will return on **Monday, March 1, 2021**. Students in special programs and Head Start or PreK will return with a regular schedule for in-person instruction, Monday-Thursday. All other students will follow a hybrid (A-Day/B-Day) schedule when they return (see the chart below).

The [safety and health protocols](#) in place are critically important for our return. Recent [reports](#), including the recently published studies from the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC), the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) (JAMA), the [National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research](#) (CALDER), and the [National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice](#) (REACH) provide evidence that schools can safely reopen when precautions for health and safety are implemented. These protocols are in place for SMCPs schools, buses, and facilities, including:

- Consistent and correct use of masks/face coverings;
- Social distancing to the largest extent possible;
- Hand hygiene and promoting frequent hand washing;
- Cleaning and disinfection; and
- Contact tracing and collaboration with the local health department.

As was shared previously, parents and guardians ultimately have the final say regarding their student's return in-person. In the fall, you communicated with the school if your student was to return for hybrid/in-person instruction or if they were to remain learning online from home. If you have not changed your intent, you need do nothing. However, if you are changing your choice - please work with your school to notify them of the change. Each school has sent its process via family communications (e.g., email, newsletter, phone calls) - please follow the direction provided by your child's school.

Students attending school in-person can choose to receive school meals during their scheduled in-school meal times. Meal distribution for all students will continue at all sites on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

St. Mary's County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or providing access to programs.

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St. Mary's County Public Schools

Phased-In Return of Students for Hybrid Instruction

January 28, 2021

Starting the week of February 1, Friday distribution will include meals for Saturday and Sunday. Students attending school in-person will be offered a take-home meal bag at the end of each school day for the following day's hybrid schedule.

Extracurricular activities and athletics will resume as well. The Fall Athletic Season is scheduled to begin on February 13, 2021, and the Spring Athletic Season begins April 17. Tryout and game schedules will be provided as we approach each season.

We look forward to the coming weeks when our students will again be in school. Thank you for your continued patience and support through this very difficult year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Scott Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

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

Phased-In Return of Students for Hybrid Instruction Spring 2021

Phase/Dates	Student Group	Notes
PHASE 1		
Monday February 8, 2021	Regional Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAIL • COMPASS 	Students in these programs will continue with their regular schedule with in-person instruction being delivered each school day (Monday-Thursday). <i>They will remain in this 4 day/week schedule throughout the following phases as well.</i> All other students will be online.
Phase 2		
Tuesday February 16, 2021	Students by grade cohort return: Elementary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start and Pre-K • Grades K and 1 Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 6 High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 9 and 12 	Head Start and Pre-K will return with AM and PM sessions- for in-person instruction Monday-Thursday. <i>All Head Start and Pre-K classes will follow an AM/PM schedule for social distancing purposes.</i> Grades K, 1, 6, 9, and 12 will begin the hybrid model with in-person instruction 2 days per week with the A group attending Monday and Wednesday and the B group attending Tuesday and Thursday. Fridays will remain an online work day with dedicated office hours and opportunities for intervention and enrichment as well as professional development and instructional planning.
Phase 3		
Monday March 1, 2021	All remaining students return: Elementary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start and Pre-K • Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 6, 7, and 8 High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 	Head Start and PreK will continue with AM and PM sessions- for in-person instruction Monday-Thursday. All grades, K-12, will begin in-person instruction 2 days per week with the A group attending Monday and Wednesday and the B group attending Tuesday and Thursday. Fridays will remain an online work day with dedicated office hours and opportunities for intervention and enrichment as well as professional development and instructional planning.