

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

512 Cedar Street
Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

Joan Mast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Ext. 41102 or 41103

January 3, 2022

Dear Scotch Plains-Fanwood Community,

Thank you for your continued support as we safely reopened our schools to in-person instruction after the winter break. As part of our steps to help stop the spread and keep our schools open for in-person learning, we offered free testing on Sunday – and over 1,200 students, staff, and their families took advantage of the opportunity.

The testing reaffirmed that while some community transmission of the disease exists, we can continue to operate in person with safety protocols, including schedule changes, enhanced masking, and regular testing. If the positivity rate rises and significantly impacts staffing numbers and/or student attendance, we will need to switch to remote learning, as outlined in our plans. However, this is not currently necessary.

Schedule Adjustment: Week of Jan. 3

Since we have been advised that holding single session days without lunch is an effective mitigation strategy, we will extend these through Friday, Jan. 7. This reduces the amount of time students are around each other, especially during lunchtime when students are not masked, and gives the school nurses time to perform contact tracing and assess the status of COVID-19 in our schools.

If a switch to remote learning for an individual school or the whole district needs to occur, you will hear directly from me. Any decisions would be made in consultation with the Department of Health and after exhausting all other options. Our goal remains in-person learning, as we know this provides the best outcomes for our students.

Reporting to School Nurses and High-Quality Masks

All parents and guardians must use the [Student COVID-19 Reporting](#) form found on the district's home page to report COVID-related activity. Please be considerate of other students and families, and keep your child home if they exhibit any symptoms or if they are sick or are awaiting a test result because they are symptomatic. In addition, we are exploring opportunities to offer additional COVID-19 testing to our community and we also encourage you to seek testing elsewhere and will share updates with you about any additional testing opportunities.

Experts say that well-fitted surgical masks, especially N95 and KN95, are the best protection against the highly transmissible omicron variant of the virus. We encourage everyone to use these types of masks, instead of cloth masks which have been shown to provide less protection against the Omicron variant.

Prioritizing In-Person Learning

Our community has shown great flexibility throughout the pandemic, and we know you want answers about whether our schools will remain open to in-person learning. We will continue to provide regular updates this week as we analyze the current wave of cases. While evidence is showing that many of these cases are mild, we want to prioritize protecting the safety of our most vulnerable community members who are at the highest risk of getting seriously sick, while balancing this with our commitment to in-person instruction. Principals will be communicating information specific to their schools as situations vary from school to school.

Thank you again for your resilience, patience, and understanding as we work together to prioritize health, safety and learning.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joan Mast
Superintendent