

# The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

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Superintendent of Schools

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November 15, 2020

Dear SPF Community,

Over the past few days, as SPF elementary schools reopened for in-person instruction, our school community has seen a sudden increase of students and staff testing positive for COVID-19. Currently, there are 15 COVID-19 positive cases impacting 6 schools and 84 individuals in quarantine. All of these cases originated outside of the school district. The District is working closely with the Union County Department of Health to initiate contact tracing. All persons identified as close contacts have been notified of quarantine protocols.

**Due to the significant increases in COVID-19 cases throughout our state and community, and after careful consideration of the risks associated with continued in-person instruction, Scotch Plains – Fanwood School District will shift to full remote learning for all students, including special education students, from Monday, November 16, 2020 through Friday, January 15, 2021.** Students will return for in-person instruction on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. The District reserves the right to extend remote learning if circumstances warrant it, or in the event it is required by the State of New Jersey. The decision to shift to remote learning was made in consultation with the Union County Department of Health, the interim executive County Superintendent, the district lead nurse, the district Physician, and with the support of our Board of Education.

The primary factors leading to this decision are as follows:

1. When employees are mandated to quarantine due to close contact with a positive case, building administrators must reassign key personnel on short notice, which can lead to inadequate supervision of students. While quarantine is an effective way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, it also presents significant operational challenges for our school district. A single positive case can lead to several individuals needing to quarantine.
2. The health and safety of our students and staff remains paramount. With the current surge of positive COVID-19 cases in our state and community, discontinuing in-person instruction is the most effective way to mitigate community spread of the virus.

I recognize that virtual learning comes with challenges for some students and families. However, I am confident that our dedicated teachers and support staff will continue to do everything possible to deliver meaningful instruction for all students. Please stay in contact with your student's teacher(s) and principal so we may assist you during the period of remote instruction.

Over the coming weeks, we will continue to monitor COVID-19 positive case trends in our community and will consider resuming in-person instruction prior to January 19<sup>th</sup> if it is safe to do so. With the holidays approaching, I urge you to remain vigilant and heed the warning of public health officials who recommend skipping large gatherings to mitigate the spread of this virus. Be sure to practice self-care and encourage your children to do the same. As always, I appreciate your flexibility and patience during this difficult time.

Respectfully,

Dr. Joan Mast  
Superintendent of SPF Schools