



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

Timothy M. Van Tassel
Superintendent

Laura Guerrette
Executive Secretary

January 22, 2021

Good morning Suffield Public Schools Families,

The purpose of this correspondence is remind families that beginning next week, the Suffield Public Schools will begin our phasing-in of 5 day in-person learning. At this point, I have stopped keeping track of what phase we are now in, so we will be referring to our transition-to-full as the “Next Phase” to our operational status.

Beginning next week, our elementary schools are prepared to lead our district in providing 5 day in-person learning to our Suffield Public Schools students. Although not surprising, we are expecting approximately 82% of our Spaulding students and 80% of our McAlister students to be present within each of our elementary schools. Beginning the week of February 1st, we will be welcoming approximately 72% of our middle school students to in-person learning, and on February 17th, we anticipate a little more than 62% of our high school students returning to full in-person learning. While we hope and anticipate seeing these percentages increase with our monthly (elementary) or quarterly (secondary) phase-in periods, we fully understand and support the many reasons why not all of our students will be attending in-person. We will continue to support dual learning opportunities for both in-person and remote students for the remainder of the academic year.

To provide further reassurance to our families who may still be uneasy with our transition back to full in-person learning, the administration, faculty and support staff will, once again, prioritize reviewing health and safety protocols as we did at the onset of this school year. The district will remain steadfast in our approach to practicing good hygiene, wearing masks, and keeping as socially distant as possible - ["Give It Some Air!"](#) On-going efforts will be made to reinforce these expectations, and we will continue to closely monitor our effectiveness on a continuous basis.

As we enter the Next Phase, it is essential that our families continue to partner with us in keeping our students and staff healthy and safe. While we have set the expectation that in-person attendance throughout the month remain consistent for student and administrative reasons, we do ask that parents not send their children to school if their children, or any of their immediate family members within the household, are presenting with COVID-like symptoms. If health concerns persist for multiple days, please contact the school office – and your child will be given an exception to attend school remotely and not marked absent. It is important to note that these unique and special circumstances will be accommodated through a direct communication with our school administration or nurses. As stated previously, intermittent attendance will not be permitted – so we ask that you reserve the use of these exemptions for only the most necessary of circumstances. I recognize that this is an imperfect system that will

likely need further review in the weeks ahead, but with your support – I am confident we will be able to make this work as best as possible.

While I had hoped that the vaccine rollout to our faculty and staff would have taken place by now, we have been informed that this is likely to not occur for several more weeks. Depending on the number of vaccines available and the need to administer them in a timely manner, the day of our mass distribution will result in us shifting to asynchronous learning for either full or part of the school day. We have requested that our vaccinations occur on a Friday to minimize the impact of this significant undertaking, and the North Central Health District is hopeful they can accommodate this request. Once I have more information on when this will be occurring, I will be certain to send as much prior notice as possible so that our parents can make arrangements for their children.

I would like to close by thanking our entire school community in minimizing school-based COVID-19 exposures since returning to school this past September. Our lack of school-based transmission is a tribute to your collective efforts, and I am so looking forward to turning the corner next week and making the most of what time we have left in the 20-21 school year.

I hope you all have a wonderful weekend, and I look forward to our successful transition as we enter into the Next Phase.

Sincerely,
Timothy M. Van Tassel, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools