



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

Timothy M. Van Tassel
Superintendent

Laura Guerrette
Executive Secretary

March 16, 2021

Dear Suffield Public Schools Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this communication is to raise awareness about the number of COVID-19 student cases we are experiencing within the Suffield Public Schools. We have continued to reinforce health and safety protocols such as mask-wearing, social distancing to the greatest extent possible, and good hygiene practices; however, our emerging pattern of positive cases and transmission between individuals within close proximity to one another gives importance to this update. The purpose of this letter is to not sound the alarm that our schools will be returning to hybrid status, but to openly communicate what is occurring in hopes of forging a partnership with our families to reverse our current trend.

As of February 17, 2021, the Suffield Public Schools have been providing a five day in-person option to all students in PreK-12. This option has enabled many students to return to their classrooms, engage with their teachers and peers in person, as well as, return to a somewhat normal school routine during a time of tremendous uncertainty. To-date, we have been able to successfully accomplish our transition back to a full in-person learning model with relatively few positive cases and quarantines.

With this being said, it is important that I provide the following data table to highlight the number of positive cases by school over the past four weeks. As the data indicates, we are beginning to see a trend that we must work together to try and reverse.

# of Positive COVID-19 Cases in SPS (Feb. 15-Mar. 16)						
	Week of 2/15/2021	Week of 2/22/2021	Week of 3/1/2021	Week of 3/8/2021	Week of 3/15/2021 (2 days)	Total
SHS	1	2	8	2		13
SMS		1		1	3	5
MIS			1		1	2
AWS				2	2	4
Total	1	3	9	5	6	24

In addition to our positive cases, there are currently 137 students (districtwide) on quarantine with several additional cases that are pending test results. With cases and exposures increasing across the district, it is important that we remain vigilant in the days and weeks ahead. In addition to the universal health and safety protocols we have been following for the past year, the

following are additional steps we can take to prevent further spread of the virus among our students:

- Closely monitoring household sicknesses;
- Keeping children and siblings home from school when symptoms are present among family members;
- Informing our nurses of exposures and positive cases as soon as possible;
- Supporting the district with identifying close contacts if your child is positive (sports teams, club activities, etc.).

I recognize how much of a challenge this year has been for everyone, but we need to remain especially careful with the introduction of new variants. We do not have any evidence to support our recent uptick in student cases is related to a more contagious strain; however, we must be as vigilant as possible in the absence of this information.

I thank you for your ongoing support in keeping our schools and community safe.

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