



# SHAWNEE MISSION

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 9, 2021

Dear Shawnee Mission School District Families,

As the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) continues to navigate through the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also been busy thinking about and planning for next school year. One of the questions that a number of families have asked concerns whether students will have the same options for remote learning next year that they had this year. We know that some students have thrived in the remote learning environment, and are interested in having a similar option during the 2021-2022 school year.

Over the last several months, the district has asked for clarity from the Kansas Department of Education about whether we would be able to continue providing remote learning, as we did this school year. The answer we received is that the provision of remote learning was made possible by the suspension of state requirements during the pandemic, and absent a pandemic, there is no legal way to continue providing the remote learning option. **Based on that decision, SMSD will not have a remote learning option for next school year.**

Across the state, there are several school districts that are making the decision to open virtual schools, and there are a number of [virtual schools](#) currently in existence. It is important to understand that a virtual school is **not** the same as remote learning, as experienced in SMSD. Virtual schools generally provide learning in an **asynchronous** manner, where students work independent from their teachers. In some virtual schools in Kansas, asynchronous learning allows student/teacher ratios as high as 152:1. In remote learning in SMSD, students and teachers have had regular scheduled times to meet together, along with times when students work independently, and the student teacher ratio has been the same as for in-person learning.

We do not believe that a virtual learning model would give us the ability to guarantee the same level of high quality instruction and personalized learning that is necessary to meet the goals of the district Strategic Plan. We will continue to advocate at the state level for a change in law that would allow us to provide a remote learning option, in order to meet the needs of students who learn best in that environment.

Sincerely,  
Mike Fulton  
Superintendent