



**St. Mary's County Public Schools
Central Administration**

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Dr. J. Scott Smith
Superintendent

September 3, 2020

Dear SMCPS Families:

Yesterday afternoon, we shared important information in our [Town Hall](#) meeting about next steps in our Fall 2020 Safe Return to School Plan. Over the last several months, we have provided ongoing communication about the [SMCPS Recovery Plan](#) for bringing our students back into our schools for in-person instruction.

This summer, we outlined the plan for opening schools online, with a process for phasing in groups of students in a gradual and gated process to allow for a safe and monitored return. In the September 2 Town Hall, more detailed information was provided, including specific dates for when students return. These are:

Dates	Student Group	Notes
Phase 1: Beginning Monday, September 21, 2020	Specialized programs return, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start • Pre-K • SAIL • COMPASS 	These students will return to regular schedule with in-person instruction being delivered each school day (Monday-Thursday). <i>They will remain in this 4 day/week schedule throughout the following phases as well.</i>
Phase 2: Beginning Monday, October 5, 2020	Students by grade cohort return with in-person hybrid instruction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten • Grade 1 Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 6 High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 9 • Grade 12 	Students will begin hybrid model with in-person instruction 2 days per week and online instruction 3 days per week
Phase 3: Beginning Monday, October 19, 2020	All students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K - 5 Middle School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 6 - 8 High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades 9 - 12 	All Students in hybrid model with in-person instruction 2 days per week and online instruction 3 days per week.

By the conclusion of the first quarter, we anticipate all students will be in school for hybrid learning. As each phase progresses, SMCPS will monitor ongoing community health data and CDC guidelines to evaluate next steps. Adjustments or refinements may be made based on these data and implementation experiences during each phase.

When students return to school, the hybrid learning model includes a rotating schedule for in-person learning with reduced class sizes and reduced numbers of students in the buildings. To provide for social distancing measures in classrooms, one of the critical steps is scheduling to provide reduced capacity. With this in mind, the rotational schedule will provide for two groups - A-Day and B-Day - that will be split in each school alphabetically. Each school roster will be reviewed to determine the most appropriate alphabetical split which will result in equal numbers of students in each group. Parents will have an opportunity to notify the school of siblings across grade levels and schools to assist in scheduling so students living in the same household will attend school on the same day.

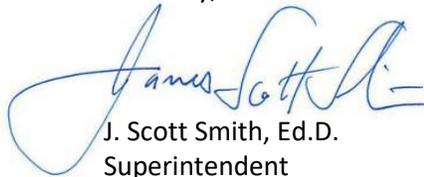
A-Day students will attend in person on Mondays and Wednesdays, and B-Day students will attend school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The remaining days of the week during hybrid instruction will be online through the Schoology platform.

As this process begins, families will be provided a choice to attend school in the hybrid model or to continue with solely online learning. Online learning will continue on the Schoology platform and parents forgoing in-person instruction will be responsible for progress through the platform material Monday through Thursday and provided interactive time with instructors on Fridays to check progress and review work completed. Additionally, families will be asked to confirm their transportation plans - either transporting students on their own or using SMCPs bus transportation. Families will be asked to commit to these choices for each marking period. Over the next two weeks, schools will be in direct contact with you to ask for this important information. Please be sure to check your emails and listen for call outs from your school.

90% of our students have connected with their teachers and classrooms in the Schoology platform and have had interactive sessions using Google Meet. We are working diligently to connect the remaining 10%. Schools will continue to distribute materials, including technology, to students who do not have a device. Please be sure to contact your school directly if you do not have access to a device.

There is much work ahead but we are off to a determined start. I want to thank you for your continued support and look forward to the days ahead. The challenges placed before us will be overcome - by our resolve, our unity, and our unwavering commitment to our children.

Sincerely,



J. Scott Smith, Ed.D.
Superintendent