

April 13, 2021

Dear Fayette County Public Schools families:

After today's meeting with our partners from the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, I am pleased to share that we continue to see relatively low numbers of community spread, with a 7-day average of new cases of 33. This is a little higher than last week, but the health department team said this morning that some of the increase is coming from a cluster of cases in the detention center.

Since we have not yet reached the two-week mark where spring break travel would affect our data, we remain cautiously optimistic that we will continue to see low transmission rates in Fayette County. Now that our community has reached the yellow levels on our FCPS In-Person Learning Matrix, it is going to take continued work to remain there.

All students whose families have chosen in-person learning are back on campus – a benchmark only made possible by efforts, dedication, commitment, and determination from everyone in our community. This has not been a one person or one committee effort – this has truly taken a village.

We are grateful to our teachers and instructional teams for their creativity, stamina, and masterful ability to keep kids engaged and connect with families. We celebrate our support staff – especially those in food service, transportation, and maintenance – for their tireless commitment to serving students, families, and colleagues. In addition, we recognize our community leaders, community members, and families who leaned into the role of co-teacher, tutor, supporter, and homework monitor.

With just 25 days until the last day of school, we ask everyone to remain vigilant and adhere strictly to the health practices that have gotten us to this point. In the cycle of a school year, this is one of the most important times for us to be together in-person because concepts and skills taught over the previous months begin to merge into mastery.

At our elementary and middle schools, students are taking spring assessments designed to gauge their learning in reading and math. Known as the MAP test – short for Measures of Academic Progress – this nationally normed assessment is given three times a year to track improvement and ensure students master standards for each grade level.

I am pleased to share that data from the winter tests showed growth at every grade level tested – first through eighth. Even more encouraging, scores earned in 2021 at each grade level were nearly identical to the benchmarks earned by students in that same grade level prior to the pandemic. We recognize that not all students participated in MAP testing while they were learning virtually, so this current cycle is critical to get a complete picture.

It is important for us to remember that the 2020-21 school year was a school year. It was certainly different from ever before, but teachers were teaching, students were learning, and support was provided. Now that our students have returned in-person, we are using our remaining time this school year to pinpoint areas where support is needed and target our efforts to ensure that our students are ready for the next challenge.

Programs like Summer Ignite, which will be offered at 69 sites in June and July, will play a role in further shoring up areas of need. We are also looking ahead to supports needed for the 2021-22 school year. Our sense of urgency has never been greater to not simply return to normal, but to reimagine a normal that personalizes learning and helps every child reach their unlimited potential.

Sincerely,

Marlene Helm,
acting superintendent