

**Jan. 5, 2021**

Dear FCPS families:

Our teachers and staff have been busy this week preparing to kick off the spring term with virtual instruction for students on **Thursday and Friday, Jan. 7 and 8**, and reviewing the safety procedures that will allow us to safely return to in-person learning.

In accordance with the [FCPS COVID-19 In-Person Learning Matrix](#), our Core COVID Team met today to review conditions with the virus in consultation with the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department. [The seven-day average of new cases in Fayette County today is 218, placing our community in Stage 5, which is purple.](#) In light of these current case numbers, all schools and special programs will provide **remote instruction only** for the weeks of Jan. 11-15 and Jan. 19-22.

Allow me to explain that the addition of a purple phase to the state's green, yellow, orange, and red categories in the FCPS Matrix was to clearly identify the circumstances under which we would consider a return to campus while we are in red.

We know this is not the decision many families were hoping for. However, the data tells us this is our best route at this time. Next Tuesday, on Jan. 12, we will make a determination about Jan. 25-29. Our goal is to give families and staff ample time for planning and preparation.

The health and wellness of our students and staff is our top priority and we are committed to returning to in-person instruction as soon as conditions allow. When possible, the district will follow a graduated return model that brings students back to in-person instruction by grade level:

- Phase 1: grades K-2
- Phase 2: grades 3-5, 6, 9, and 12
- Phase 3: grades 7, 8, 10, and 11
- Phase 4: preschool

We will continue to provide remote learning five days a week for students whose families prefer that option.

We appreciate the toll this pandemic has taken on our students and families, employees, community, Commonwealth, and world. Since I stepped into this role 36 days ago, many people have shared their perspectives with me, and the only universal opinion is that everyone wants to return to normal.

Please know that we share that desire. However, the fact that we have remained with remote learning is not for lack of trying, planning, or hard work. Since March, our school and district leaders have conducted extensive research, developed multiple plans, adopted detailed safety procedures, and ordered and distributed more than 600,000

pieces of PPE. At every turn, we have considered not only our students, but also the adults who are key to their in-person success.

We remain hopeful that our community will work together to reduce the levels of COVID-19 so that we can begin the transition to in-person learning. It is going to take each and every one of us to follow the health measures we know will help mitigate the spread of this disease – wearing masks, practicing proper hand washing, and maintaining social distancing as much as possible. It will take determination, grit, and perseverance, but I know from experience that if it can be done anywhere, it can happen here in Fayette County.

Sincerely,

Marlene Helm, FCPS acting superintendent