

January 19, 2021

Dear Fayette County Public Schools families:

Bluebirds may be the first sign of spring, but it was the sight of a bright yellow school bus in my rear view mirror that brought me joy this morning. I am certain the bus driver thought I was crazy when we came to a red light and I rolled down my window to give him a thumbs up.

With cautious optimism, I'm encouraged to share that community efforts to rein in COVID-19 cases following the holidays appear to be working. During our weekly data review with the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, health officials shared that while still high, new cases of the virus are trending down.

Other metrics we reviewed showed:

- The seven-day average of COVID-19 cases is 197 today, compared with 235 a week ago.
- Between Jan. 12 and Jan. 18, 132 students and 38 staff were diagnosed with COVID-19.
- The 170 students and employees who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past week are spread throughout 48 of our 68 elementary, middle and high schools, which would have resulted in significant classroom quarantines and school closures.
- So far this month, 343 students and 123 staff members have tested positive for the virus. This number is especially troubling when you consider that 305 students and 72 staff had COVID-19 during the entire month of December.
- Current cases in the community are not the result of institutional spread within assisted living centers or detention facilities.
- FCPS employees began receiving the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccinations today thanks to a partnership with the University of Kentucky. Our staff is very excited about this opportunity and we believe a high percentage of our team members will participate.

Although I wish this were not the case, our [FCPS COVID-19 In-Person Learning Matrix](#) data indicates that **in addition to our previously announced remote learning for the week of Jan. 25-29, we need to continue with remote learning Feb. 1-5, 2021.** While disappointed, we simply cannot compromise on the health and safety of our staff and students. We are committed to providing face-to-face instruction as soon as it is safe; please remember that families will also have the option of remote instruction for their children.

We will continue to review the data every day. If the numbers decline over the next two weeks the way they did this past week, we will be back in school during February. Please encourage everyone you know to take precautions to stop the spread so we can make that happen!

Sincerely,

Marlene Helm, Fayette County Public Schools acting superintendent