

Surry County Public Schools

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Surry, Virginia 23883



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SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE ON THE START OF THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

JULY 15, 2020

Dear SCPS Families and Staff Members:

I am writing to share information about how Surry County Public Schools (SCPS) is planning for the opening of school which is scheduled to start on September 8, 2020. With continued intensive planning, we will be ready for the 2020-2021 school year, and I believe that it is important for the community to understand the process we are implementing, with guidance from the Surry County School Board, to achieve that goal.

First, I want to express my hopes that you and your family members are safe. COVID-19 dramatically changed all our lives with some members of the community experiencing strong challenges to their physical, mental and economic well-being. Nonetheless, members of the Surry community are stepping up. I am proud to say that many SCPS staff members have stepped up and embraced new roles and responsibilities to ease the workload.

I find myself reflecting on the past few months and want to express my gratitude for our community's patience and understanding as I know that many of you have questions, thoughts and are genuinely concerned about how we will return to school and what our reopening of school plans will look like this fall. We shared a draft of these plans at last night's school board meeting and will be working with community committees and focus groups over the next few weeks to finalize a plan that will be submitted to the school board for approval in August.

I have been working with administrators for the last several weeks to ensure that we create a healthy and safe plan for the reopening of schools that meets the needs of our

students and staff members. We will continue to closely monitor information related to coronavirus transmission trends in and around Surry. However, we recognize that our plans need to be flexible due to the uncertainties associated with the virus. Even in the face of continued uncertainty and fear, we are preparing for the 2020-2021 with multiple reopening scenarios in mind. All decisions on how to reopen schools will be based on health conditions related to COVID-19. Continued guidance will be sought from the Governor's Office, Virginia Department of Education, and health officials. Decisions to move from one phase to another will depend upon facts as they relate to COVID-19.

We have proposed the following three scenarios, as well as possible variations, depending on the number of students who can be served in each scenario.

1. Scenario 1 - Virtual Instruction

- a. Virtual learning supplemented by Instructional Packets and Flash Drive Support
- b. PreK-Grade 1 will receive iPads
- c. Grades 2-12 will receive Chromebooks
- d. Limited in-person instruction for select groups of students
- e. Curriculum: Virtual Virginia
- f. No Extracurricular Activities will be offered
- g. No Athletic Activities will be offered

2. Scenario 2 - In-person Instruction for All (multiple scenarios are offered due to space limitations)

- a. **Option 1:** Monday -Thursday in-person; Friday (at-home) instruction via packets or virtual assignments .
 - i. All students may attend in-person.
 - ii. Virtual Instruction will be available for families who choose to remain virtual.
 - iii. Shortened school days (8:00am to 2:00pm to allow for deep cleaning of buildings daily)
 - iv. PreK-Grade 1 will receive iPads
 - v. Grades 2-12 will receive Chromebooks
 - vi. Mitigation strategies will be employed on buses and in schools (face masks, daily health screenings, social distancing, frequent hand washing or sanitizing)

- vii. Curriculum: Virtual Virginia
- viii. No Extracurricular Activities will be offered
- iii. No Athletic Activities will be offered
- b. **Option 2: Combination of in-person and virtual learning activities**
 - i. Student population will be split into two groups who will attend on Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday; Wednesday will be used as deep cleaning and planning days.
 - ii. Virtual Instruction will be available for families who choose to remain virtual.
 - iii. Shortened school days (8:00am to 2:00pm to allow for planning and deep cleaning)
 - iv. PreK-Grade 1 will receive iPads
 - v. Grades 2-12 will receive Chromebooks
 - vi. Mitigation strategies will be employed on buses and in schools (face masks, daily health screenings, social distancing, frequent hand washing or sanitizing)
 - vii. Curriculum: Virtual Virginia
 - viii. No Extracurricular Activities will be offered
 - ix. No Athletic Activities will be offered
- 3. **Scenario 3 - Traditional in-person instruction: In-person learning in this scenario may occur without physical distancing or face masks. Other health mitigation strategies such as frequent hand washing and sanitizing will be employed.**
 - a. PreK-Grade 1 will receive iPads
 - b. Grades 2-12 will receive Chromebooks
 - c. Virtual Instruction will be available for families who choose to remain virtual.
 - d. Curriculum: Virtual Virginia
 - e. Extracurricular Activities will be offered (limited)
 - f. Athletic Activities will be offered with VHSL guidance

With each scenario, families will have a Virtual Instruction option. In addition, the scenario that we select for the start of the school year will also be significantly influenced by which phase of reopening the state is in at the beginning of the school year. Feedback will be solicited from families, staff members and the community on what is best for our students. It will be a complicated and difficult decision to make.

I want to thank you again for your patience and also for participating in our survey(s). Your input has had a significant impact on how we address our community needs as we

plan for the 2020-2021 school year. I hope that you and your families are enjoying the summer months and are excited to begin a new school year in September.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Serbrenia J. Sims". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Serbrenia J. Sims, Ed.D.
Superintendent