



Savannah-Chatham County Public School System

208 Bull Street / Savannah, Georgia 31401 / 912.395.5600

July 16, 2020

Dear SCCPSS Families,

On March 18, 2020, Governor Kemp issued an executive order calling for schools to halt in-person instruction to protect the state from the spread of COVID-19. That order triggered widespread changes to our education system and way of life. Teachers transitioned to remote teaching; families turned their living rooms into classrooms; and students took on new challenges, balancing their studies with the physical and emotional impacts of this pandemic as well current social unrest. It was profoundly challenging, but you, your children, and our staff handled it with unbelievable commitment, patience, and effort.

Now, four months later, we have experienced so much change. As we look ahead to August, our commitment to health and safety will guide us into the new school year. We see the big picture: the continuing rise in COVID-19 cases in our own community and across the country; constantly evolving guidance from city, State, and Federal health authorities; and the knowledge that as the virus continues to change, our tactics and strategies will change also. Every decision to reopen a sector of society is determined by data demonstrating a decline in the spread of COVID-19. Our schools are no different. Data determines dates, and as such, we continue to monitor the progress towards our “new normal.” When the course of the virus changes, we must be ready and prepared to adapt. Over the last several weeks, we have studied the impact of this virus on our community’s health, surveyed parents and staff about preferences for reopening, and heard from a Task Force of more than 100 persons from across our community, including health care professionals, to help us make the most responsible decisions about opening schools.

The current data demands we begin the 2020-21 school year in an unprecedented way and one that we deem safest for all at this point. We are preparing to deliver education using a virtual model until the data indicates that is safe to meet for in-person instruction. In addition, we opened a dedicated virtual learning school to ensure that those families choosing a permanent virtual approach to learning always have that approach as an option. Make no mistake, we learned lessons from the overnight change in March and planned intensely for a better start this fall.

We know that most families want as much in-person instruction as is safely possible, and we share that goal. Our plans, our staff, and our families must be nimble so we can adjust as needed, as the public health landscape continues to shift. We will continue to lead through the lens of safety and academic excellence, giving children what they need to excel—and recognizing that this may be very different from our most recent past, especially in this time of crisis. We cannot ignore how this virus has affected every aspect of our lives, disrupting our normal processes from shopping for groceries, attending worship services, attending to those who are hospitalized or going to see a doctor, attending funerals, and now, attending school.

I am eager, anxious, while also nervous—just like you. I know that virtual learning is not a substitute for in-person instruction. What we will offer this fall will be an improvement over the abruptly implemented experience in March. While there are still many questions and concerns, we are confident that students and staff are safer using the virtual learning approach. We will work with you every step of the way to answer questions about this

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approach until we can move back to in person instruction safely. We are committed to doing everything we can to make this easier for you—without compromising your health and safety.

Unpack your patience. Practice compassion. Together we can ensure that the 37,000+ students of SCCPSS—your children—get the education they deserve in the safest, most supportive environments possible.

Warm regards,

Ann Levett

M. Ann Levett, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools

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