



TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOLS

DAVID M. HEALY

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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To our Toms River Regional Schools families and staff:

As we approach Thanksgiving, I want to express my own sincere gratitude as well as provide an important update.

Earlier this week, following a rapid increase in the volume of positive COVID-19 cases throughout our district, and in consultation with Ocean County Health Department officials, our school nurses, and our leadership team, I made the difficult decision to transition our schools temporarily to all-virtual learning. Here's why.

The risk matrix we receive from the NJ Department of Health through OCHD identified our region as "high risk" a week ago, a designation that requests consideration of all-remote learning. Moving to "very high risk" demands implementation of all-virtual learning, and it's been abundantly clear that positive cases locally are trending in the wrong direction, and fast. Meanwhile, there's been growing concern internally about elements of operations becoming unsustainable. While our buildings have done more than an admirable job of honoring protocols and ensuring the safest environment possible, managing these procedures is a full-time, 24/7 job which impacts all district departments. The personnel and efforts required to contact trace, staff shortages, busing, and challenges with substitute coverage are just several examples.

I want to state clearly that although we've made this temporary transition, we continue to monitor the situation by the day, even by the hour. Which is to say, although we identified Dec. 14 as the projected return date with the caveat that it could be later if cases continue to surge, we could also return students sooner if we deem it safe and effective. And this can be done on a school-by-school or even a per-grade basis. We're prioritizing our most vulnerable special education students, and are thus working closely with our Department of Special Services to orchestrate a more immediate return. We understand that one size does not fit all for a district as large and complex as ours, and any school or cohort we can return safely for blended learning, rest assured we will.

As I mentioned in my previous communication, this was clearly not an easy decision. We did not want to close our buildings as it is our strong belief that our students need the academic and social-emotional benefits of an in-person school environment. We are, however, constantly evaluating the situation while consulting with our local and state health officials. We will remain in communication with you moving forward, both on a district and school level. So stay tuned.

In the meantime, this year more than any as we look to enjoy this Thanksgiving holiday, I'm grateful for this Toms River Regional Schools community and the fortitude you've all exhibited during this challenging time. I wish you all a wonderful, safe, and relaxing Thanksgiving, and I thank you for your continued support of our schools and our students.



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God bless.

Sincerely,

David M. Healy
Superintendent of Schools