



January 20, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians of the Rumson School District,

Today's email announcing that the Rumson School District would be virtual for the next two weeks was a difficult one to send. After months of building up our capacity for in-person instruction, I was hopeful we would be in the stretch towards full days and normal times for our students. Unfortunately, with an increasing pattern of both COVID-positive cases resulting in quarantined classes and students as well as a growing list of pending COVID tests due to symptomatic individuals, we simply cannot maintain in-person instruction. We all know that having our children in school is in their best interest, however, with the current numbers within our school community threatening the well-being of students and staff, it would not be responsible.

As announced earlier today, both Deane-Porter and Forrestdale School will be *virtual from Thursday, January 21st through Wednesday, February 3rd, returning on Thursday, February 4th.* **THIS IS A REVISED RETURN DATE!**

This decision was reached under the direction of Monmouth County Health Commission No. 1, which has jurisdiction over public health decisions in our area, and is in line with guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health as outlined in the **COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools** (updated January 19th). Please note, although there is no evidence that numerous positive cases and pending tests within our school population are linked to in-school transmission, the occurrence of so many cases in one location needs to be proactively addressed before in-school transmissions occur.

As we reflect on what brought us here, we must project forward to what can be done to ensure we do not get stuck in a vicious cycle of in-person and virtual instruction. Our children certainly deserve better than this and we have the capacity, as a community, to prevent future cycles. I am asking each and every parent to work with us to get back to school on February 4th and stay in school for the remainder of the school year!

Until we move out of the high-risk activity level, we implore you to:

1. Refrain from having children participate in group activities that occur in indoor settings.
2. Refrain from having children participate in group activities that do not require a mask.
3. Refrain from having children quarantined due to exposure, travel, or symptoms engage in activities with anyone else. They should be quarantined at home.
4. Do not use this two week virtual instruction period as an opportunity to travel out of state.

Given our current situation, we have to assume that, should these behaviors be ignored, in-person instruction will continue to be under threat.

Undoubtedly, we all returned from winter break with a new sense of optimism, so this setback is disappointing. We know COVID fatigue is very real; we all feel it! But if we can lock this down over the next two weeks, I am confident that the Rumson School District is ready for a great in-person experience when we return on the 4th. We just need to give it one more push to reach the normalcy our kids get from consistent and steady days in school.

Sincerely,

Dr. John E. Bormann

Superintendent of the Borough of Rumson School District