

October 30, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Simsbury Public Schools Staff:

I hope that you are well. We are now 2 months into the school year and to date we have returned our K-8 students selecting to participate in full in-person learning back into our schools. The Simsbury Public Schools continue to work on COVID-19 strategies that mitigate the spread of the virus and, in consultation with our local health district, continue to monitor health metrics at the state, county, and Farmington Valley level. We continue to see a low level of impact to our schools from the virus.

In addition to the fine work occurring in our classrooms at each school, I want to thank our teachers and students for their efforts with the distance learning program. While our delivery models differ at the elementary and secondary level in terms of design, your ability to adapt and create connections with each other has been admirable during the first few months of the school year. I also want to thank the parents, especially those of our youngest students who assist in supporting the work of distance learning.

I have received inquiries from both families and staff asking about the district's relationship with the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD). The FVHD Director is the assigned liaison for the Simsbury Public School district. The Director holds weekly Zoom meetings with all twelve FVHD member school districts to address any emerging concerns or questions, as well as to update us all on trends in the Farmington Valley. Additionally, she provides weekly metrics and information on community cases by district. Our administrators also work very closely with the FVHD on contact tracing when we do have a member of our school community test positive for the virus.

On a weekly basis, the state releases updated public health data related to their School Learning Model Indicators. Please scroll down on the Coronavirus webpage to access this week's [FVHD Learning Model Indicator Chart](#) that compares the metrics for the 12 Farmington Valley Health District communities to the data for Hartford County and the state overall. This metric measures the cases per 100,000 people over a 14-day period and is a leading indicator for school districts when making decisions on instructional models. To date, the Farmington Valley Health District metrics continue to support in-person learning. While there have been a few positive cases in individuals that either work or attend the schools within the Farmington Valley, there have been no instances of secondary transmission within the schools as a result of these cases. That trend supports the fact that our mitigation strategies in schools have been effective.

The Farmington Valley has seen a substantial uptick in community cases in the last few weeks, specifically in Avon and Farmington. We will continue to monitor the metrics closely and will provide a report to Simsbury High School families next week specifically related to the return of full in person learning at Simsbury High School. In our efforts to keep you informed, please see the newly launched [data dashboard](#) which denotes the current number of COVID cases by school location with the corresponding number of individuals in the district who are quarantined. The dashboard will be updated on a weekly basis.

At a recent Board of Education meeting, administrators presented the annual October 1st [Enrollment/Class Size Report](#). Our 2020-21 enrollment is 65 students below what had been projected. A few other interesting data trends were shared with the Board, including that our incoming Kindergarten class was 42 students below the projected number. We also saw growth in the number of homeschooled children, which increased by 26 students over last year. Undoubtedly, both of these data points are tied to the current pandemic. As of October 1st, we have 399 students at the elementary level participating in distance learning, representing roughly 20% of our K-6 enrollment. Henry James has 96 distance learners and Simsbury High School has 192, for a total of 288 distance learners at the secondary level. More specific information is provided within the presentation.

I am grateful for all members of this school community who are working together to create the conditions for a successful school year. It is certainly an unpredictable and challenging time, but as we move forward, your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis
Superintendent of Schools