

WEST DEPTFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

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To the West Deptford Community,

I wanted to take the time to wish the community the best for the holiday season. The past year has been a very trying one. Our students, staff, and parents have been remarkably resilient in spite of very difficult circumstances. I want to thank the community for the understanding and patience you have shown with our recent change back to remote learning. As you know, we were very excited to see our students in-person in the hybrid model and we were disappointed to have to close and return to virtual learning.

I want to clarify the reasons why we are continuing remote learning. As more and more students and staff test positive, many staff and students continue to be quarantined. Each time there is a positive test, we coordinate with the Gloucester County Department of Health to ensure that we are complying with the safety protocols. Back in November, as more of our staff were required to be quarantined, running the school day became impossible. As always, we consulted with our stakeholders, which included the following: parents, teachers, school nurses, our district physician, the Department of Health, the Board of Education members, administration, and others. The feedback was consistent. A majority of our stakeholders did not want to move to remote learning, but understood that if we could not staff the schools, we could not logistically run a school day. There is a rumor that the Department of Health shut down the schools; I want to clarify this is not the case. Our District did not close to in-person learning only because of safety issues. We were forced to move to remote learning because many families continued to have confirmed positive cases, forcing our staff and students to quarantine, and creating a cascading effect on the ability for our buildings to remain open for live instruction. Ultimately, this was an administrative decision, not a vote from the Board of Education, or a directive from the Department of Health. We are continuing to consult our stakeholders to determine the best path to return back to in-person learning.

As we are nearing winter break, and as cases have continued to increase in the county and in our town, we ask that you please reach out to your child's principal if your child is quarantining or has tested positive. Although students are currently virtual, we are continuing to monitor numbers and evaluate scenarios. We are continuing to report positive cases to the County, and are continuing to complete contact tracing procedures. Again, we are continually reassessing this ever-changing situation. We are hopeful that numbers will start to trend downward with our staff and students. If we get to a place where we can reopen schools, we will surely do that as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will continue to do our best to continue to offer the best remote learning possible. We ask our parents to please continue to communicate student needs with our administrators.

We understand that there is no substitute for in-person learning. Furthermore, we know that certain students struggle with remote learning more than others. If you have questions about your child's education, please contact the building principal. We are here to support your child's learning the best way we can.

As the holiday approaches, we ask that you take care and exercise caution when gathering in groups. The more careful we are, the sooner we can return to in-person learning.

We wish you a wonderful holiday season. Please stay safe!

Sincerely,
Greg Cappello, Superintendent

PRIDE, PASSION, AND A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE