



Forbes Road School District

159 Red Bird Drive
Waterfall, PA 16689



Forbes Road High School
159 Red Bird Drive
Waterfall, PA 16689
814-685-3866

Forbes Elementary School
143 Red Bird Drive
Waterfall, PA 16689
814-685-3865

January 20, 2021

Dear Member of the Forbes Road Community:

As you may know, the State recently eased their guidelines for on-campus instruction to allow hybrid instruction of elementary school students for the second semester while students in grades 7-12 remain on full remote instruction. The State further said that schools had the option to remain on full remote instruction due to the continued elevated number of COVID cases. Since then, Central Fulton School District has tentatively planned to return districtwide using a hybrid model on February 1st and Southern Fulton School District has tentatively planned a return, also using a hybrid model, on February 8th. Both of these plans are pending a review of the number of COVID cases at the time. In contrast, Chambersburg Area School District has elected to remain on full remote instruction until March 29th.

Our School Board and Administration have received a substantial amount of feedback on this issue from parents and guardians that reflect this contrast in views. Some parents want their children back on-campus two days a week (This is the typical hybrid model being used. Students will remain on remote instruction the other three days each week.). Others don't want to take the risk of their children returning to campus for two days a week when COVID numbers are so high.

The School Board, who ultimately have the final say in when we return, have considered this issue from every angle, and with people's lives as well as students' education at stake, it has weighed heavily on their shoulders. *The Board has decided that Forbes Road will remain on full remote instruction until either A. Fulton County is out of Substantial for two weeks in a row, or B. Forbes Road faculty and staff have been given access to the vaccine.* We believe that the vaccine is our best chance of being able to stay open for the remainder of the year when we do return to campus.

Full remote instruction is challenging for families, staff and administration. However, with teachers providing their normal instructional content in both real time and in recorded versions that students can watch over again for review, there is little difference in terms of the opportunity to learn. What is missing in some cases is the enforcement of participation/work completion and opportunities for in-person socialization. These are important, but when weighed against the potential for students and staff becoming seriously ill or even dying, the Board thinks that in the current environment the risk still outweighs the benefits of returning to campus two days a week.

Although this is a Board decision, I want to go on record as saying—I agree. We work with students to remediate or catch up as part of everyday education. If students struggle in an area or move in to our district a year behind, we are generally able to regain that ground over time. But there is no

catching up if someone is dead or has lifelong physical damage from the virus. Losing one of our students or staff would be one too many.

People have asked me to make a guess as to when we will return to on-campus instruction. I hesitate to go on record when I don't have solid answers, but my best guess would be in early March. I repeat—that is only a guess and up to the Board to decide. It will depend on the number of COVID cases we see and access to the vaccine. That said, those parents who may have concerns about returning when Forbes Road does offer on-campus instruction will have the option of finishing the year using remote instruction.

Some of our community will be supportive of the Board's decision to remain on remote instruction until we can provide a safer campus for our students and staff. Some will be critical of their decision because they think that two days on campus is better than none and worth the risk. What I can say is that every member of our School Board took this decision very seriously and are doing what they believe will be best—and safest—for our students and staff in the long run.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria Scott-Bollman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Maria Scott-Bollman, Ed. D.
Superintendent
Forbes Road School District