



Dr. Ronald G. Taylor
Superintendent of Schools
Tel. (973) 762-5600 x1820/Fax (973) 378-9464
rtaylor@somds.k12.nj.us

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Dear SOMSD Community:

Recently we received confirmation of two-Covid positive student cases in our District. Both are students enrolled at Columbia High School, one is a student-athlete on our tennis team. The other student (non-athlete with no exposure to students on our school sites) unfortunately is suspected to have been infected from their attendance at a possible house-party/celebratory gathering. **The cases which have been identified at this point have been localized to specific areas outside of sanctioned District-related sporting practices/events or school areas.**

District administration has been in contact with the Maplewood and South Orange Departments of Health as well as town officials. Members of the CHS Tennis team have been notified and are quarantining. As of today, the District has decided to suspend all tennis matches/practices for the next two weeks. At this point, there are no other known cases of any other student-athlete exposure or confirmed Covid-positive cases. Therefore, our existing NJSIAA-mandated fall sports practices/schedules (these sports currently include: football, boys' & girls' soccer, cheerleading, band, field hockey and boys & girls' cross-country) will continue as normal and we will continue to adhere to our COVID-safety measures to ensure that our student-athletes and staff are safe.

Due to privacy, we are not permitted to share more information regarding students/families; however, the individuals in question have been quarantined and the town health departments are working on contact-tracing. If there are any additional confirmed student-cases, the Health departments will reach out to necessary parties and contact the District. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

For anyone who may have been exposed to a positive or suspected case, you should be tested, especially if you have symptoms, and quarantine until test results are received. As a reminder, free COVID testing is being offered at the Maplewood community pool through the end of the month. Also, please note that updates to the District's reopening plan will be shared at our next virtual Board of Education meeting taking place on Monday, October 19, at 7:30 pm.

In the interim, we encourage parents to please monitor for symptoms and **remember to notify your school building administrator should you, your child, or a family member test positive and/or be exposed to COVID-19.** We also want to remind families/students that we are not out of the woods yet; the CDC and state guidelines continue to encourage mitigation strategies to keep COVID cases from spiking again. Among them social gatherings (without mask-wearing or social distancing) can become super-spread events, please make sure to continue to follow guidelines.

Recently the Maplewood Board of Health issued an emergency resolution to mandate mask-wearing at all times in Maplewood Village. In a statement released yesterday, Township Mayor, Frank McGehee, and Candice Davenport, Health Officer & Public Health Nursing Supervisor encouraged everyone, including our youth, to "wear facial coverings or masks when they are in the Village."

Last night, at the virtual South Orange Board of Trustee meeting, Village President, Sheena Collum shared, that South Orange reported five-positive COVID test cases in one-day, after close to five-weeks of no cases (April 2020 marked the last time their cases were at this number). In addition, South Orange, Emergency Management Coordinator, Scott Egelberg, stressed that "unnecessary gatherings are discouraged and all gatherings (see NJ guidelines on pg. 2), in general, should follow all state and CDC guidelines and encouraged all families to continually discuss and remind each other to stay safe and not to grow complacent."

In closing, please know that the District continues to work hard to develop solutions to issues that may be present during the current times in our world. We continue to value parent/family relationships and engagement and hope that you will continue to provide the support that it takes to ensure that your child adheres to safety guidelines. Please feel free to

reach out to us at any time if you have any questions or concerns or to report any event being held in violation of Covid restrictions to our office or local officials.

On behalf of the District, Maplewood Township, and the Village of South Orange, our request to parents and students is the same, “please help support our community, your neighbors, friends, classmates, and local businesses by wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing, adhering to in-person gathering guidelines (see NJ guidelines below) so we can all be safe during these unprecedented times.”

Educationally yours



Dr. Ronald G. Taylor

COVID Facts for Essex County, Maplewood & South Orange

- While our cases may be low, they are increasing in other areas all across the state.
- NJ has been added to Massachusetts’ Higher Risk States List, and now if you travel to MA you are required to fill out a travel form and quarantine.
- Last Thursday, Governor Murphy reported that our state had 1,301 new positive cases in one day - Thursday's number was the most announced in one day since late May.
- The Essex County 7 day average positive new case count has more than doubled from 24 to 56 in the last 30 days.
- 1,091 people have died in Essex County and 27 people have died in Maplewood.
- State COVID hospitalizations have been increasing every day - hitting a mark of 666 late last week - the highest mark since August 5th.
- Maplewood has had 378 confirmed cases to date and while we saw 17 new cases in August and 16 in September, just 11 days into October, we have 9 new active cases with over 50% of them being in their thirties or younger.
- South Orange reported 5 confirmed cases yesterday, 10/12, after five-weeks of no cases reported.

NEW JERSEY - Indoor/Outdoor Gathering Guidelines (as of 9/2/20)

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/reopening-guidance-and-restrictions/are-people-allowed-to-gather-in-person#direct-link>

Indoor Gatherings

- **General indoor gatherings** must be limited to 25 people or 25% of a room's capacity -- whichever number is lower. All attendees at indoor gatherings must wear face coverings and stay six feet apart.
- **Indoor gatherings for weddings, funerals, or memorial services** must be limited to 150 people or 25% of a room's capacity -- whichever number is lower.
- **Indoor gatherings for religious and political activities protected under the First Amendment** must be limited to 150 people or 25% of a room's capacity -- whichever number is lower.
- **Indoor gatherings for entertainment centers** where performances are viewed or given, including movie theaters, performing arts centers, and other concert venues, must be limited to 150 people or 25% of a room's capacity -- whichever number is lower.

Outdoor Gatherings

- **General outdoor gatherings** must be limited to 500 people and social distancing must be practiced.
- There is no limit for **outdoor gatherings for religious or political activities protected under the First Amendment**.