

December 20, 2021

Dear South Orange Middle School Parents/Guardians:

The health and safety of our students is our priority. Therefore, under the recommendation of our local health departments (both Maplewood and South Orange) we must temporarily close the South Orange Middle School (SOMS) building to in-person instruction to protect the health of our students and staff.

Due to a “considerable uptick” in [COVID-19] student cases across all grade levels at SOMS, beginning on Tuesday, December 21, all students will transition to virtual learning for the remainder of the school week.

We understand this may be a hardship for some of our families and can be disruptive to student engagement, however, the health and safety of our students and staff is paramount. According to current data, the cases at SOMS are not due to in-school transmission. However our community transmission is high and the cases are rising. To prevent the possibility of additional cases we are moving to a virtual learning format. At this time, students will return to classrooms after winter break ends as scheduled on Tuesday, January 4, 2022.

Your child will follow their normal/typical academic schedule during virtual learning and should sign into their CANVAS account to access assignments and google meet links for their classes. Students who do not join their class via the google meet link will be marked absent. Some additional important information is below:

- All after-school clubs will be held virtually;
- Bagged to-go school lunches will be provided and available for pick-up at the school front door during your child’s normal lunch hours on Tuesday and Wednesday (*Thursday, 12/23, is an early dismissal day so lunch will not be served*).

If your child develops any COVID-19 symptoms, please contact your health care provider and request the child be tested for COVID-19. Find COVID-19 testing sites: essexcovid.org. The District’s MediMobile Covid-19 testing will be open on Wed., December 22 from 4 pm - 6 pm, at the BOE building. Please visit [bit.ly/C19Test_Vaccine] for more information on testing and vaccination.

Your actions will affect how well our community prevents the spread of the virus. Please remind your child(ren) to take these steps:

- Wear a mask in indoor public settings;
- Limit their interactions to a small circle of friends and family. It is recommended to test prior to any large gatherings, especially if it includes anyone who is high risk.
- Keep your distance from others. Wear a mask when you cannot maintain distance;
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you are experiencing symptoms.
- Wash your hands, cover your cough, and keep up your best hygiene and sanitation.
- The District strongly encourages vaccination, if your child is not yet vaccinated, please consider doing so.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding.

South Orange & Maplewood School District; South Orange Middle School, Lynn Irby, Principal