

# A Message from the Spackenkill Superintendent



## One District, Multiple Paths to Excellence

December 11, 2020

Dear Spackenkill Community,

This week has been a bit of a roller coaster. It began with Hagan announcing a positive COVID-19 case and having to go remote for the week. Then the High School had its own COVID case, which, coupled with staffing challenges, resulted in SHS going fully remote for Tuesday. Yesterday, Todd had an early dismissal and was fully remote today due to contact tracing. We also learned Thursday evening that another individual at Todd had tested positive. There is no question that this yo-yo effect of being in and out of school, and the anxiety caused by learning of positive cases, takes an emotional toll on students, parents, and staff, especially as we enter the holiday season.

The consequences of the roller coaster we have been riding are multiple and far-reaching. Due to our closeness of interaction between the schools in our district, with students having siblings in other schools and staff traveling between buildings, this has greatly affected our daily operations.

There are numerous stressors affecting us at this time, including:

- staffing challenges (teachers, TAs, custodians, bus drivers, food service staff);
- large amounts of students needing to quarantine;
- siblings having to quarantine;
- number of students going from hybrid to fully remote (particularly at the high school); and
- socio-emotional factors compounded by the holiday season.

The Return to School Committee and members of the Board of Education met today to discuss these stressors and the impact they have had on our district. The Committee unanimously supports the following announcement:

**Due to strains on our system caused by the uptick in cases, the SUFSD will be going fully remote starting Monday, December 14, and following the winter break, returning in Hybrid 1 on January 19.**

In our meeting today, we analyzed the pattern of COVID-19 cases following the Thanksgiving break. The post-Thanksgiving surge that we've seen in our district, as well as throughout the county and state, began on the Thursday following our return (December 3) and became so unmanageable as to force the district to go fully remote two weeks later. Meanwhile, Dutchess County positive case numbers went from 235 in September to 448 in October to 1,768 in November, and 1,102 by just one week into December.

The size of our district enables a ripple effect to easily spread throughout the community. This ripple effect reaches other schools every time one building experiences a COVID-related situation. For example, the recent Hagan incident affected staff and students in all four of our school buildings, plus a bus driver. We foresee the same pattern following the holiday break, which could land us right back to

where we are now. Extending our remote time until January 19 will allow us to avoid the COVID exposures that will inevitably crop up after the holiday break and eliminate the yo-yo effect and strain of quarantining. Keep in mind that the closure for Thanksgiving was only a five-day break, and health authorities have predicted an even greater surge after a much longer holiday recess.

We want to re-establish predictability for families, students, and staff. This helps teachers plan more effectively and gives students the instructional consistency they need. We are a close-knit community and we need to stay together during these unprecedented times. There is no one incident that has put us in this situation, but a series of ones. Spackenkill pride has enabled us to get to this point in the school year. We are proud of our faculty, staff, students, and the community as a whole for persevering thus far. It is that same pride that will carry us through our current challenge. We thank you again for remaining resilient, especially during the holiday season. As always, please reach out to your principal, counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker if you need help or support during this difficult time.

### **COVID-19 Update and Dashboard**

Since we started the school year, we have had 20 positive COVID-19 cases, as reflected on the New York Forward COVID-19 Dashboard. [Please continue to consult the NY State COVID-19 Report Card for updates.](#)

### **Meals During Remote Learning and Over the Holiday Break**

During **remote learning**, the Spackenkill School District will be providing free breakfast and lunch to all students every day at the Todd Middle School, between the hours of 7:30-8:30am. Meals will be packed together in a grab-and-go bag. Parents can pull up to the front of the building, where the meals will be distributed.

During the **holiday recess** we would like to provide meals to any student who needs them at no cost. We will be distributing bulk meals on two dates over the break, **December 23, 2020**, and **December 28, 2020**. This distribution will be held at Todd Middle School, between the hours of 12:00pm – 1:30pm. Parents can pull up to the front of the building, where the meals will be distributed. This will be a bulk meal pack, containing a week's worth of meals for each student.

**If you are going to use this service, you must contact Lisa French, Director of Food and Nutrition Services, at 845-463-7836 or [foodservice@sufsdny.org](mailto:foodservice@sufsdny.org) to reserve your child's meal no later than December 18, 2020.** You will be asked to provide your child's name and school. Should you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to call. All calls and distribution information is confidential.

### **PBA Delivers to Community**



The Town of Poughkeepsie Police Benevolent Association (PBA) continued its tradition of providing meals to families in need during the holiday season. This year, members of the PBA raised money to purchase gift cards to Adams Fairacre Farms and delivered the gift cards to schools located in the Town of Poughkeepsie. Pictured above are representatives of the PBA; our own SRO, Steve Doughty (*second from left*); and

Spackenkill High School Counselor and LEO Club Advisor Adam Hammond (*third from left*). We are so appreciative of their contributions. The PBA would like to thank the Spackenkill Community for their help.



### **Adopt-a-Family Fundraiser Needs Your Help**

Thank you to all who have contributed so far to the LEO Club Adopt-a-Family fundraiser. We are so grateful for your assistance! This year, we have had lower than usual participation because we do not have “giving trees” in our lobbies and there are fewer students on site. Still, the importance of helping families in need is **more urgent than ever**, with many households struggling to survive the pandemic financially. We continue to ask the generous Spackenkill Community for donations in check form. Please write a check in any amount to the **Spackenkill High School Activity Fund** and put **LEO Club** in the memo line.

The check can be:

- placed in the District Office dropbox in an envelope marked LEO Club (the District Office is located behind Todd Middle School and has a secure dropbox outside the front door); *or*
- mailed to LEO Club, Spackenkill District Office, 15 Croft Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603.

We ask that you make your donation by December 18. **Thank you and Happy Holidays!**

Families seeking assistance can contact their school's nurse or social worker.

#### **Nassau:**

Nora Bergstraser, MSN, RN: [nora.bergstraser@sufsdny.org](mailto:nora.bergstraser@sufsdny.org)

Melissa Coyle: [melissa.coyle@sufsdny.org](mailto:melissa.coyle@sufsdny.org)

#### **Hagan:**

Sharon Dooley-Russo, RN: [sharon.dooleyrusso@sufsdny.org](mailto:sharon.dooleyrusso@sufsdny.org)

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#### **Todd:**

Alyssa Karcz, RN: [alyssa.karcz@sufsdny.org](mailto:alyssa.karcz@sufsdny.org)

Kate Casucci: [kate.casucci@sufsdny.org](mailto:kate.casucci@sufsdny.org)

#### **SHS:**

Liz Giancaspro, BSN, RN: [elizabeth.giancaspro@sufsdny.org](mailto:elizabeth.giancaspro@sufsdny.org)

Tracie Phillips: [tracie.phillips@sufsdny.org](mailto:tracie.phillips@sufsdny.org)

Just another reminder that **December 23 has been added to the holiday break, so there will be no remote learning on that day**. This is a change from the previous calendar, as we have added one day in the likelihood that we won't have to use as many snow days as in the past.

Please enjoy the weekend as we refresh after a very trying week. We wish families a Happy Hanukkah!

Sincerely,

Paul M. Fanuele, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



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**15 Croft Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603; 845-463-7800**