



November 18, 2020

Dear Families and Staff of Bristol Tennessee City Schools, Kingsport City Schools, and Sullivan County Schools,

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic early last spring, the Sullivan County Regional Health Department and the three public school districts in Sullivan County have worked alongside each other to best address the health and educational needs of our children and families. This ongoing partnership has been incredibly valuable, allowing everyone to effectively monitor our community's health and better understand COVID-19 as new information has become available. We continue to communicate, holding weekly meetings to review data and determine the best course of action for each school district.

Over the past nine months, the level of COVID-19 community spread has varied across Sullivan County. We have experienced periods of relatively low spread and times of high community spread. As we move into the fall, we are currently experiencing some of the highest levels of community spread that we've had at any point during the pandemic. And with flu season on the horizon, we remain very concerned about what the next few months will bring regarding the health of our families.

We are continuing to implement disinfecting procedures, mandatory face coverings, and social distancing wherever possible in our schools. In the judgement of the Sullivan County Regional Health Department, these steps have kept schools from being a contributor to the increase in COVID-19 spread throughout the community. Together, we are asking for your help to extend our important safety efforts beyond the school doors. Please wear a face mask and socially distance when you are out in the community. Include frequent hand washing into your normal routines. Find ways to avoid large group activities where social distancing is not possible. Get your annual flu vaccination. These steps will help control the spread of COVID-19 cases and other illnesses across our community this fall and winter.

We are asking you to please do your part by taking these important precautions that will help improve the safety of everyone in Sullivan County. The more we are able to commit to these behaviors, the faster we will be able to return to more normal operations in our schools. We can't wait until the days when our students and staff, as well as everyone in our community, are able to return to the activities and life we are so accustomed to in northeast Tennessee. Please join us in this community-wide effort. If everyone takes these steps together, we can stem the tide of COVID-19 throughout our community.



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