



Press Release 08/06/20

Springfield School District Continues to Follow the Medical Experts; Will Reopen Virtually Starting September 8, 2020

Springfield School District (SSD) has announced that the 2020-2021 school year will open on September 8, 2020 in a virtual format.

The Springfield Board of School Directors heard from many of its constituents as it grappled with this decision. But given the current medical data trends, it became clear that a virtual opening was the optimal choice. This offers a balance between the health and safety of the students and staff and an authentic learning experience for students. School Board Director Jacqueline Guy notes, “As a parent and a board member, I am deeply saddened that our students must start virtually. I know the springtime was a source of frustration for some families, but working with the team, I know the instruction and live components will be vastly improved. I trust the team with doing what is right for our children.” School Board Director Jennifer Flynn adds: “I agree with Director Guy. As a parent, I would prefer my children to be in person with their teachers. However, as board members, we are volunteers, and we must put our trust in the medical input and follow the necessary steps to have a safe reopening, and, hopefully soon, return to in-person instruction.”

Spring 2020 marked the district’s first experience with virtual learning for students. As with all districts in Pennsylvania, Springfield had to pivot from the brick and mortar setting to an online learning environment when Governor Wolf ordered the closing of schools.

Dana Borrelli, parent of SSD elementary and middle school students, comments, “This has been a learning process for my family! Change is hard! The spring was challenging for everyone! However, bear in mind that the district was thrust into a sudden closure of schools and had to roll out an online learning program on the fly with no pre-planning and no prior experience with that instructional model. If we do have virtual learning in September, I trust the district will be more prepared. I know Springfield teachers want the best for their students, and they will work hard to provide enrichment opportunities and synchronous learning for our children.”

This fall, the online learning experience for SSD students will be enhanced. With the launch of the online management system, Canvas, and more frequent opportunities for synchronous learning, SSD teachers are prepared to offer a robust learning experience for their students. Springfield Education Association (SEA) President and SSD teacher Mark Schmidt says, “We will be ready to deliver a tremendous virtual experience. And when the medical data trends in our favor, we will be ready to deliver a tremendous in-person experience. We want to be back working with our students.”

SSD teacher and parent, and incoming SEA president Mike Scott adds, “As a proud teacher and parent in the Springfield School District, I want nothing more than to see our teachers and students return to their classrooms in the fall. However, given the trends in our county and region, providing the students with a daily virtual education with an increased focus on student engagement and accountability is the safest option for our students, staff, and community. I have no doubt that the passionate and dedicated professionals of the Springfield School District will build on experiences from last spring to provide the best possible education for our students.”



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While the school year will commence with virtual instruction, there are opportunities for students to participate in sports and activities on a limited basis and in accordance with public health and medical recommendations. Extra-curricular activities and sports competitions are postponed until October 2, 2020. *Voluntary* activities, work out sessions, and practices among SSD students will still occur, utilizing the same screening processes SSD has been using this summer. “I am excited that our students can still participate in sports and activities on a voluntary basis under these metrics. Caring for the mental and physical well-being of children is just as important as their academic successes,” notes School Board Director Kevin Keenan.

In a virtual learning environment with students learning at home, childcare may be an issue for working families, but Mike Ranck, president of the YMCA of Eastern Delaware County, is working with SSD to provide child care options. “Serving the needs of our community is core to our mission. We believe that in every instance, every child and every family should have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. We are proud to be able to offer working families in the district YMCA school camps to help address their school-age child care needs. More information will be available very soon.”

Along with many districts in the area, SSD examined multiple factors throughout its decision-making process. Primary among these are the health and safety of students and staff. The district follows expert advice from the University of Pennsylvania Health System and from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) on the latest medical evidence and trends of the epidemic. In addition, Delaware County school districts are also being advised by the Chester County Health Department.

Springfield School District remains steadfast in its commitment to provide each student with opportunities to meet with their best potential. “The district has worked diligently to gather information from its team of experts to help ensure the safety of its staff and students and to balance those safety concerns with meeting students’ educational needs. The administrative team’s work ethic is exceptional, and its willingness to be flexible is particularly impressive, especially in light of the difficulty of creating functioning schedules and instructional models to account for ever-changing circumstances,” notes SSD attorney Lisanne Mikula.

SSD is committed to working with the Springfield community to provide a high quality academic experience for every student, whether following an in-person or virtual model. After all, working together to support one another is a hallmark of the Springfield School District.

For more information, please visit www.ssdcougars.org/reopening-schools.