

# The Shelter Island School

## November Newsletter

November 2020

Dear Parents:

Welcome to November and Fall! When looking at the calendar to type this letter, I could hardly believe that we were entering November already! I hope you and your children are enjoying the school year. As I stated over the summer, while it is going to be different than any other school year that we have encountered, it is wonderful for everyone to be back in the building!

We are one of only two out of sixty-nine school districts in Suffolk County that are open full-time from grades Pre-K through 12! I am happy to report that all staff and students are happily and respectfully following the safety rules. Please know that we take every precaution imaginable and that Nurse Mary and I discuss the safety of our school multiple times a day. If there is ever a reason for us to be concerned, we will alert the whole school with general information and contact anyone directly involved with specific information.

The major focus of the beginning of this school year has been on your child's mental health. Our social and emotional team recently issued a survey to assess the well-being. I am happy to report the overall results were very positive. If you would like to hear about this report in detail, please come to our next Board of Education meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>. To this point as well, we will continue to try to find new and safe ways to keep all students happy and engaged throughout this school year. Since becoming an administrator, I have always had a very simple goal: make children feel happy and loved while learning as much as they can. I am happy to say, even under the different circumstances of this year, that this is still happening.

We are also still maintaining a focus on improving academics. We always want to improve our school. We have implemented many new programs this year to help our academic monitoring and progress, such as I-Ready. Please remember that while I do not see New York State Tests as the major indicator of your child's academic ability, it is one extra piece of data for us to help assess academic growth. I would also like to point out that while opting out of these tests did not affect a school district's rating in the past, they do now. In years past, if a student opted out, the result would count as a non-grade. Now, if a student opts-out, it counts as a "0" for the district, which makes it hard for our small sample size to recover.

With Thanksgiving and other holidays approaching, I would like to share guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) on holiday activities:

Thanksgiving is a time when many families travel long distances to celebrate together. Travel increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you must travel, be informed of the risks involved.

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### Lower risk activities

- Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home

### Moderate risk activities

- Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your community
  - Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on hosting gatherings or cook-outs.
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports events with safety precautions in place

### Higher risk activities

Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:

- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race
- Attending crowded parades
- Using alcohol or drugs, which can cloud judgement and increase risky behaviors
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household

Please also remember that travel to any state on the Travel Advisory list (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>) will result in your child being quarantined from school for 10-14 days upon their return, depending on the circumstances.

While these holiday conditions are not ideal, we all want our children and school community to stay as safe as possible. I wish all of you a wonderful November and a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,



Brian Doelger, Ed.D.  
Superintendent