

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

512 Cedar Street
Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

Joan Mast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

908-232-6161
Ext. 41102 or 41103

The Honorable Phil Murphy
Governor of the State of New Jersey
225 W. State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

On behalf of the more than 800 employees of the Scotch Plains – Fanwood School District, the Board of Education and I wish to convey our deep concern regarding the extremely limited access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Since March 2020, there have been countless challenges impacting our students, families, and employees due to COVID-19 and its enormous disruption of our educational system. The Scotch Plains – Fanwood School District has meticulously followed all health and safety guidelines and made numerous difficult, and sometimes unpopular, decisions to keep our school community as safe as possible. Last week, many of our students returned for hybrid instruction and we are truly happy to have them back inside our buildings. However, we would be remiss to believe that our employees genuinely feel safe at work. Additionally, a stress point in keeping schools open is having adequate staffing. Under the current conditions, it is a revolving door of teachers being placed on quarantine or in isolation resulting from COVID exposure. As district leaders, we have done everything in our power to provide a healthy and safe workplace.

A survey of our staff indicated that 90% of our employees would receive the vaccine when available. To make our workplace and community safer, we are respectfully requesting your immediate attention in addressing the need to connect all interested employees with COVID-19 vaccines so they can teach our students with minimal concern for becoming ill or unknowingly transmitting the virus to a loved one. I know that we all agree that educators are essential, so why must they wait 60+ days for an appointment to receive a vaccine?

There has been much confusion about the prioritization of educators in New Jersey's vaccine rollout plan. The fact that there has been a change in this decision is unfortunate as it conveys the belief that our teachers and our schools are not a top priority. To normalize our lives, bolster our economy and strengthen our educational system, immediate action must be taken to expedite vaccine access to all school district employees.

Time is of the essence as we approach the second half of the school year. Every week that we delay protecting our teachers, we also delay the return to consistent, uninterrupted, in-school instruction with teachers who are confident that they will not contract COVID-19 while working in the schools.

For the health and safety of our valued employees and our entire school community, please expedite access of the COVID-19 vaccine to school district employees.

Respectfully,

Dr. Joan Mast, Superintendent

Members of the Board of Education:

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