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Dear SPS Parents and Guardians,

While this week's weather forecast calls for a significant amount of snowfall on Thursday, we plan to continue remote learning as scheduled regardless of the weather conditions. We will do our best to have continuity for students, but recognize that the storm may cause cable or electrical issues and will accommodate as much as we can. We will notify staff and families should we encounter any issues that impact our system on Thursday. Please also note that due to the anticipated weather conditions, the Thursday Somerville Flu Clinic has been moved to Friday, December 18, same times at the same location. All appointments have been shifted to Friday.

We are continuing to work toward reopening our schools as building ventilation work is completed. Due to intense national and worldwide demand for a limited supply of ventilation filters capable of reducing the risk of Covid-19, the city had been recently informed that its filter orders would be significantly delayed due to these supply chain issues, that nothing could change that, and that school opening would thus be delayed until at least March. Not willing to give in, the aid of John Fish, CEO of Suffolk Construction, the largest construction company in New England currently building the new High School, was sought. He was asked to contact projects across the country looking for filters received but not yet needed for buildings with longer timelines before opening. The effort was successful and has cut weeks off the delivery time. The city is expecting an updated building readiness timeline from the contractors early next week. Once we have that, we will work to provide the community with an updated school reopening schedule.

As part of Somerville's reopening safety plan, we have also developed a comprehensive COVID-19 screening protocol for SPS students and staff. Last week, we successfully launched an initial weekly screening COVID-19 testing process for essential SPS and city staff who are currently working from school buildings and/or interacting face-to-face with students. More than 250 staff were successfully tested last week through our partnership with the Broad Institute and Tufts University.

Finally, a reminder that per state mandate, all students are required to obtain the seasonal flu vaccine by December 30th regardless of their mode of learning, and submit proof of such to their school. Parents/guardians should submit this proof to their child's school nurse via fax, email, postal mail, or by dropping it off at the school. Please be sure to contact the school and make arrangements if you plan to drop off proof of vaccination at the school. The Somerville Board of Health has also issued an order requiring all staff to obtain the seasonal flu vaccine prior to returning to in-person instruction. SPS staff should submit proof of having obtained the flu vaccine to the SPS Human Resources Office.

We are committed to a safe return to in-person instruction and will continue to work closely with the city and the unions on all elements of our reopening plan. We will also continue to post information and updates at www.somerville.k12.ma.us/back-school-2020. Thank you again, for all you are doing to support SPS students during this incredibly difficult time.

Respectfully,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent