



Important Update - Please Read

1 message

Christopher Timmis <noreply@dexterschools.org>

Thu, Dec 3, 2020 at 5:09 PM

Reply-To: Christopher Timmis <noreply@dexterschools.org>

To: Dexter Community School District Recipients <recipients@dexterschools.parentlink.net>

December 3, 2020

Dear DCS Families, Students, and Staff,

Thank you for your patience with our decision-making regarding in-person or remote learning and your commitment to the entire Dexter community. Initially, we planned to pause in-person learning for two weeks due to an increase in cases and based on the recommendation of the Washtenaw County Health Department. We began this pause on November 19th and were hoping to return Y5-6th grade students this week. Then, the Michigan Department Health and Human Services issued a statewide order that we looked to align with that moved a return to next week.

Based on the recommendation from the Washtenaw County Health Department this week, DCS will continue all Young 5 - 12th grade students in a remote learning format until early January. In addition, winter athletics will also be on hold until January. Jenkins and Bates preschool/childcare programming will remain in session. Special education programming (including ECSE) will continue in a remote format. With two weeks of instruction remaining through December, at best our students are missing 3 or 4 days of in-class instruction. The risk associated with returning to the buildings for 3 or 4 days are just too high given the current trends. Combined with the changes in structure and routine for our youngest students for the next two weeks, we know we must remain in remote learning.

This decision is based on several factors. First, the state issues a weekly list of school Covid-19 outbreaks. DCS will be listed in next week's [school outbreak list](#) due to 2 or more related cases in our buildings. The outbreak may be listed as a specific building or under the district. We have several (3 at this time) positive cases that are all connected but involve adults and students in separate buildings. Next, in the last 24 hours, the Washtenaw County Health Department has received notice of 231 confirmed cases and 8 hospitalizations. The [number of cases](#) in Dexter was 3 in October and was 97 as of today. 11% of all county cases are with kids between 0-17 years of age. This equates to 235 children. When we returned Y5-6th grade students to buildings in October, 2.2% of the cases were 0-17 year olds. This was 11 kids in the county. At this time, the Washtenaw County Health Department cannot keep up with full contact tracing for all cases due to the level of community spread.

Finally, from the beginning of the school year, we've monitored professional recommendations and guidance regarding safely providing in-person learning. The CDC, MDHHS, and other guidance from professionals all consider the number of active cases in our community to be at a level where we should continue in a remote learning format. For example, the MDHHS guidance recommends remote learning if the county has 150 or more cases per million. The county is nearing 500 cases per million at this time. The cases are spreading so quickly that the scale on the y-axis of graphs are being adjusted in triplicate in order to fit the number of new daily cases and sites like [covidactnow.org](#) have added new colors to demonstrate the increased level of cases. In short, the amount of community spread and new cases do not support a return to in-person learning.

We know that remaining in a fully remote environment is challenging for everyone. We know this is hard for our students, our families, and our staff. Our students are missing important socialization experiences. It puts a burden on local businesses as they work to respond to how these decisions impact the parents they employ. It makes connecting with each other socially even harder, especially during colder winter months. We hear the stories of challenges our families are facing, and these decisions keep us up at night because we know these tough calls directly affect everyone's day-to-day lives in very real ways. However, there is hope in sight. We have been in communication with the health department regarding vaccinations and utilization of DCS facilities to help coordinate the process for the Dexter Community. While we do not have a date for this process to begin to be offered, it will be sooner than later.

We ask our entire community to help us reduce the spread of Covid-19 so we can resume in-person learning in January. We know everyone is tired, but there is hope in the near future. If we all commit to wearing face-covering, maintaining physical distancing, and following public health recommendations, we can reduce the alarming spread in our community. We want nothing more than to see all of our Dexter kids in our buildings. We all long to hear their laughter and joy. If we collectively commit to protecting each other and reducing the spread of Covid-19 over the next several weeks, we can all see our students in our buildings again soon. We need your help and resolve to reduce the spread so our kids can safely come to school.

Thank you for your continued patience and support.

Sincerely,

Christopher Timmis, EdD

Superintendent
