

Darien Public Schools - Administrative Offices

35 Leroy Avenue – P.O. Box 1167 – Darien, Connecticut 06820-1167
Tel: 203-656-7412 Email: aaddley@darienps.org

January 29, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

I hope this message finds your family well. Budget discussions are well underway as we work to balance the current challenges before us and look forward to a post-pandemic Darien. We look forward to a budget that delivers the best opportunities for students and reflects all of our new learning over this past year. The Public Hearing on the Budget is scheduled for February 2 via Zoom <https://darienps.zoom.us/j/95506120533>.

Last week, a plan was developed to gradually welcome all secondary students back to the building for full in person learning. The plan was designed with thoughtfully spaced, incremental increases in student population so health and safety data can be monitored. Following a successful week of welcoming students in grades 8 & 12 back to school, we remain hopeful this plan will maximize in person learning with a measured approach to ensure health and safety for students and staff. The next phase of our plan is scheduled for Monday, February 8 when we welcome grade 7 and grade 9 students back to school. Grades 6, 10, and 11 will remain in hybrid until Monday, March 1. All Fridays will remain remote for secondary students until Friday, March 5.

As always, the plan is subject to change and its success relies on your partnership in exercising health and safety practices. Presently, given that general indicators are trending favorably, it is the District's intent to have in person learning for elementary students; students in grades 7, 8, 9, 12; and, hybrid learning for grades 6, 10, 11 for the week after vacation (February 22-26). We will continue to monitor this situation during our weekly meeting with our health professionals.

Elementary Instructional Hours

Earlier this week the CT State Department of Education determined that the Darien Public Schools' elementary plan meets the requirements of 177 school days and 885 instructional hours. However, we do recognize that staggered arrival schedules do not provide access to morning instructional activities for all students. Therefore, the equivalent of two hours of independent learning opportunities will be made available to students and families beginning next Friday, February 5. Engaging in this work is optional. Please visit the [elementary curriculum website](#) next Friday if you would like to access these materials. You may also visit this [FAQ document](#) that addresses other questions you may have on the topic of independent learning and instructional hours.

Tokeneke Make-Up Day

With the approval of our elementary instructional hours plan, we can now move forward with determining the make up day for Tokeneke students that is necessary due to a missed school day from storm power outages. In order to make up this without interfering with scheduled vacations and avoid extending the school year for Tokeneke students, Friday, February 12 will be a half day of in-person learning for Tokeneke students and staff. A half day of learning now will be much more productive than a half day of additional learning in June. Teachers will participate in professional development that afternoon where they must complete a required educator assessment by the Connecticut Department of Education.

Vaccinations

We continue to eagerly await an announcement from Governor Lamont and DPH opening Phase 1b of the COVID vaccine distribution to school staff, which is anticipated to begin scheduling in late February or early March. We will continue to communicate updates as they are available. Thank you for your patience in this process.

Travel Advisory

If you plan to travel, please remember that every Connecticut resident, adult or child who ventures beyond the states of New York, New Jersey or Rhode Island is subject to the CT Travel Advisory. This applies to families who ski in Vermont on the weekend. Please do not send your child to school if they have traveled outside of CT, NY, NJ or RI for more than 24 hours, unless they have tested negative for COVID-19 or completed a 10-day quarantine upon their return. Please submit the negative COVID-19 test results directly to your school nurse *prior* to sending your child to school. Also, do not forget to fill out the Connecticut Travel Health Form before returning to Connecticut.

Gatherings

Social gatherings continue to be the greatest source of positive cases reported in our schools. Please evaluate the necessity of any social gathering. If a gathering must take place, be mindful of all mitigation measures when socializing with those who do not live in your home. Remember to maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance, wear a mask and perform frequent hand hygiene. *Most importantly, if you are not feeling well, even with mild symptoms, remain home and seek the advice of your healthcare provider and testing for COVID-19.*

Inclement Weather

There is a chance of inclement weather early next week. A reminder, if it is necessary to close schools, we will proceed with a remote learning day unless there are widespread power outages.

Thank you for your continued vigilance and partnership in providing the necessary health and safety conditions to keep our community safe. We hope to continue welcoming students back to school for full in-person learning as we move into February.

Have an enjoyable weekend,

Sincerely,



Dr. Alan Addley, Ed.D
Superintendent