

Darien Public Schools - Administrative Offices

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February 19, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

As the February Recess draws to a close I hope this message finds your family in good health and that you have had an opportunity to decouple a wee bit from the digital world by enjoying a few snow days and some quality time with your family.

Weekly meetings with our health professionals include a review of current health metrics, school conditions, District practices related to athletics and spectators, school visitors and the general use of facilities. This weekly review continues to inform the decision making that prioritizes the health and safety of students and staff on a weekly basis.

Learning Models

On Monday, we resume in person learning for grades 7,8,9 & 12. State, regional, local and school metrics continue to trend very favorably; hence, we look forward to implementing the final phase of our transition plan by welcoming back to school grades 6,10 & 11 for in person learning on Monday, March 1. Friday, February 26 remains remote for secondary students. Starting March 5, all Friday's will be half days of in person learning for all students and afternoon professional development for staff.

As a result of a cluster of five (5) COVID cases affecting both staff and students, all Tokeneke first grade classes will participate in remote learning on Monday, February 22 and Tuesday, February 23. This will allow extra time for symptom development and testing. We anticipate a full return of the Tokeneke First Grade class on Wednesday, February 24.

Athletics

Consistent with recommendations from the CIAC and our local health officials, spectators are not currently permitted to attend athletic contests. This applies to events with venues on or off campus. We understand and share parents' desire to be present at sporting events. We continue to monitor this situation during our weekly meeting with our health professionals and recognize there has been conflicting information shared by organizations and, most recently, by the Governor in a press conference. We anticipate receiving written confirmation of any change in position from the CIAC and DPH and are hopeful to be able to have spectators participate in the very near future.

Travel Advisory

Are you returning from vacation or travel over February Recess beyond the borders of Connecticut, New Jersey, New York or Rhode Island? Please ***do not*** send your child to school until you have submitted a negative test for COVID-19 directly to your school's nurse ([contact information can be found here](#)). Please see the [CT Travel Advisory](#) for complete information and all forms that must be submitted to the Department of Public Health.

Mask Guidelines

New recommendations for masks are focused on improving mask fit and filtration. A mask that fits well will be snug against the nose and chin, and not have gaps at the cheeks. Improved filtration can be achieved by adding layers of fabric, a disposable filter, or by "double masking." Please visit the CDC's "[Improve the Fit and Filtration of Your Mask to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19](#)" webpage for more information.

Gatherings

Social gatherings continue to be the most common reported point of exposure to COVID-19. Please continue to evaluate the necessity of any social gathering. Remain mindful of all mitigation strategies 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.

Exclusion From School

If you, or your child(ren), are not feeling well, even with mild symptoms, please remain home and seek the advice of your healthcare provider and testing for COVID-19. If your child is notified, officially or unofficially, they are a contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, please keep your child home from school and speak with your school nurse. If you are uncertain about whether your child should attend school, please keep your child home and [contact your school nurse](#) for further guidance.

Vaccine Update

We continue to collaborate with our local health department in planning for the vaccination of school staff once we are notified about any change in the Connecticut COVID-19 vaccine eligibility requirements.

Budget

Before the February Recess, the Board of Education adopted its FY22 Budget. The proposed budget of \$106,624,100 represents an increase of 4.03% above the 2020-2021 budget. A copy of the FY22 BOE Budget can be accessed on the District [website](#).

Educational and program improvements include the protection of class size through the District, continued support of the 1:1 technology initiative with digital devices for students in grades K-2, 5 and 9; software, network and wireless technology infrastructure upgrades for student learning; a technology technician; increased staff and STEM opportunities for high school students, support for social and emotional

learning; a Teacher in Residence Program; and, the restructuring of the elementary Special Education & Support Services Facilitator positions to Assistant Principals.

Thank you for your participation in the budget process and for facilitating the Board in developing a budget that keeps the District moving forward, even, and most especially, in these challenging times. The Budget now moves through the Board of Finance & RTM process with the final RTM vote scheduled for May 10.

Once again, thank you for your collective efforts in adhering to the current health and safety conditions as we look forward to welcoming all our students back to school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Addley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Dr. Alan Addley, Ed.D
Superintendent