



January 2022 - Return to School

1 message

Sun, Jan 2, 2022 at 4:57 PM

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Dear DCS Community,

Happy New Year! I wish we had better news to share regarding the pandemic to start off this new year, but we are in the midst of a drastic uptick in Covid-19 cases as a result of the Omicron variant. Thank you to the entire DCS community for your continued commitment to each other and for helping us provide in-person instruction this year.

Important Note: DCS does not plan to move remote unless we have no other option. We began this school year with a commitment to in-person instruction. We remain committed to having our students in our schools with mitigation strategies to protect the safety of our students and staff. Our district leadership team just finished meeting to analyze staffing levels for tomorrow and reviewed mitigation strategies to protect students and staff.

DCS will be open tomorrow, as planned.

If you are not comfortable sending your child(ren) to school and choose to keep your child(ren) home, there will not be a penalty to your child(ren) (but work will need to be made up - particularly in the later grade levels just as with any excused absence). Please notify each school's attendance office if your child(ren) will not be attending tomorrow.

As we embark on the new year, we are faced with a significant increase in Covid-19 cases in Washtenaw County and across the state due to the Omicron variant. The cases per 100,000 doubled from last week to 97.4, and the positivity rate is at 11.99, the highest rate this school year in Washtenaw County. As of December 21, the total population vaccination rate in Washtenaw County is 62.7%, and the rate for 5-11-year-olds is 48.5%. We believe our student vaccination rate to be much higher. As of the last measure, we had between 65% and 83% of our students vaccinated (varying by grade levels).

If your child is sick, **DO NOT SEND THEM TO SCHOOL.** Please notify your child's school office and follow the steps under **monitoring student illness** below:

Monitoring Student Illness

The next part of this communication is extremely important at this time as we return to school after winter break:

1. If your child has any symptoms of illness (including cold-like or allergy-type symptoms), keep them home and contact their medical provider for assessment and/or possible COVID-19 testing.
2. If your child is waiting on a COVID-19 test result for ANY reason (they have symptoms, need a test for a scheduled medical procedure, have had an exposure to someone who has COVID-19, etc) keep them home until results are available.

This is a critical time coming off of winter break. We are aware that a lot of travel, family gatherings, and group events took place. This doesn't mean we can't continue with the safe operation of our district, but it will only happen with a great deal of cooperation from the community.

Masks are Required

We ask that you speak with your child about appropriate wearing of a mask. With the increased cases, we all have an obligation to do what we can to protect our entire DCS community. At minimum, properly wearing a mask in school and on our buses will help protect our most vulnerable students and staff. Please know that we have students and staff who are immunocompromised or have parents/spouses/children who are undergoing treatment for cancer or are also immunocompromised. We have a collective obligation to do what we can to help protect the most vulnerable in our community. This includes properly wearing masks. With the drastic increase in cases, the need to properly wear masks has never been greater. We want to keep kids in school and keep our staff safe so they can educate your children. This requires everyone to do their part. Diligence in mask-wearing, spacing (to the best of our ability), hand washing, cleaning, quarantining and ventilation will continue.

Large Events

The MDHHS (Michigan Department of Health and Human Services) has advised school districts to reconsider all large gatherings that may contribute to the spread. District administrators are discussing safety for these events. We have been allowing audiences and spectators at our events and have asked all attendees to wear masks. Cooperation at our sporting events with the mask requirement has been spotty, at best! Moving forward, we ask for your help in adhering to the masking requirement. We want to continue to allow spectators and audiences at events but do not want to contribute to the spread that may prevent in-person learning. For now, we will continue to welcome our attendees, but we may need to change this practice depending on cooperation from our Dexter spectators and visitors.

Additional Health/COVID-19 Information

If you have had an exposure or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please contact your child's school office to make them aware. We will be working through voice and email messages and will attempt to answer all questions in a timely manner. As a reminder, per the MDHHS all individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 must isolate at home for 10 days. Some close contact situations that occurred over break may qualify for in-school testing. If your student is a close contact to a positive case that occurred within the previous 7 days, please keep them home Monday and report this information to the school. We will contact you to determine the timeline for return to school. In addition, we will keep you updated if the Washtenaw County Health Department updates its guidance for the school setting.

Throughout these last two years of the Pandemic, we have been making decisions that we believe are in the best interest of our students' health (both physical and social emotional) and academic success. Yet, with the constantly changing conditions and guidance, we continue to feel challenged with the decision making process. Therefore, this is our plan moving forward for this first week back after Winter Break. We will assess how this plan is developing throughout this upcoming week and report out again later this week.

We hope that you have been able to enjoy the holiday season safely. We can't wait to have students back in our buildings on Monday. The Wylie sled hill was active today, kids were running through town in their Dexter gear over the weekend, and everyone is ready to get 2022 started. Thank you for your partnership in protecting the safety of our students, staff, and families while we work collaboratively to educate our students.

Thank you for your continued support, take care, and Go Dreads!

Sincerely,

Christopher Timmis, EdD

Superintendent

Dexter Community Schools

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