

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Update for February 8, 2021

Email the CCS Department of Engagement at engage@columbus.k12.oh.us

SUCCESSFUL “FIRST DAYS” BACK IN CLASSROOM FOR MANY COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS STUDENTS LEAD TO ADVICE FOR FAMILIES ON WHAT TO EXPECT IN WEEKS AHEAD:

Last week, Columbus City Schools successfully and safely welcomed back its first cohorts of students in grades Pre-K through 3, along with students with identified complex needs in all grades and Career Technical Education students at the Fort Hayes Career Center and Columbus Downtown High School.

During our Virtual Family Engagement Session with Superintendent Dr. Dixon, many of our principals, teachers, and building staff shared their “first day” experiences and some good advice for families on what to expect in our Blended Learning model over the next few weeks ahead.

CCS STUDENTS EAGER TO SAFELY RETURN TO CLASSROOM:

Even though the first week was interrupted by a Snow Day and Professional Development Day, the first cohorts of students to return to the classroom were clearly eager to get back. The attendance rate for those first “first days” was 84% districtwide, as these students transitioned to in-person blended learning.

The coming week will see two more “first days.” Today and on Thursday, students in grades 4 and 5 will join the youngest learners as they return to our school buildings for the first time in more than eleven months. Cohort A starts today (Monday); Cohort B starts Thursday.

Dr. Dixon has shared that the District is still working to figure out how to safely bring more small groups of students back into our school buildings.

CHECK-IN WITH FAMILIES AND SCHOOL STAFF:

Thursday’s Virtual Family Engagement Super Session with Dr. Dixon featured staff at several of our schools sharing how these first days back to class went and what families need to know as the next cohorts come in.

All of the principals and staff reported that the return to the classroom went smoothly. They credited the safe transition to abundant planning with their building teams and ongoing communications with their families.

Students were well prepared to follow all of the health protocols: coming into the buildings wearing masks and then washing their hands, walking 6-feet apart in the hallways, and staying seated at desks that were separated and protected by plexiglass barriers.

With more students returning to elementary schools this week, here's some insight and advice from our principals and staff shared during our Virtual Family Engagement Super Session:

- Principal Ebone Johnson (West Mound Elementary) - Right now, our schools aren't allowing parents or volunteers to come into the buildings. That's why it's important for parents to communicate regularly with their children's teachers. She credits her school's phenomenal start to families who were in contact with their children's teacher and knew what to expect ahead of time.
- Second Grade Teacher Jeanette Johnson (Berwick PreK-8) - In addition to letting families know what to expect in the classroom, she has hosted several online meetings to help parents understand what to expect when the students aren't in the classroom. She suggests setting up a checklist of what students should be doing when they're learning remotely at home.
- Principal Kevin Hainer (Shady Lane Elementary) - He was most impressed to see the kindergarteners come into the building and immediately gravitate to their teachers, who they only knew on the zoom screen. He calls that a true sign of how staff are successfully connecting with students and families despite our virtual limitations.
- Second Grade Teacher Ruth Palmer (Gables Elementary) - Instead of the traditional community supplies which were shared by multiple students, she uses "book boxes" to help her students keep all of their books, materials, and supplies in one space and promote safe social distancing.
- Principal Kerri Myers (Scottwood Elementary) - She continues to offer virtual tours of the school and classrooms to keep families informed of all the health and safety changes that have been made. She's also adamant that there's no substitute for face-to-face in-person instruction. On those first days, she could immediately see that it's more exciting for the students and more impactful for their learning.
- Head Custodian Shinda "Mr. Q" Prillerman (Como Elementary) - He reminded us that safety and success are truly team efforts. At his school, keeping students healthy and safe is possible when the custodians, food service team, bus drivers, teachers, staff, and the principal all work together.
- Assistant Principal Laronn Marshall (Liberty Elementary) - On these first day, he expected that he would need to be the "mask police" to remind students to keep their masks on. To his great surprise, even the youngest students knew how to properly wear their masks, get hand sanitizer, and follow all of the health protocols in place... and he credits parents helping to remind children of just how important those layers of protection are.

You can watch the recording of this Virtual Family Engagement Super Session and all of our previous sessions at www.ccsok.us/Page/8212.

MULTI-LAYER HEALTH PROTOCOLS KEY TO OPENING SCHOOLS:

New information from our national health partners at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention add support to the effectiveness of multi-layer health protocols to keep students and staff safe during in-person learning even without the game-changing COVID vaccine.

Teachers do not need to get vaccinated against COVID-19 before schools can safely reopen, the head of the CDC recently shared, noting there is increasing data to suggest that schools can safely reopen and that safe reopening does not suggest that teachers need to be vaccinated.

Vaccinations of teachers is not a prerequisite for safely reopening schools, she added. arguing that data from K-12 schools which put in place multi-layer precautions - like wearing masks, social distancing, hand washing, and proper cleaning - show little evidence that in-person classes contributed meaningfully to the spread of COVID-19.

So far, more than 1,300 teachers and staff at Columbus City Schools have received the COVID-19 vaccine. By Wednesday, we expect that number to double as more than 3,000 CCS personnel have scheduled vaccination appointments over the course of the first week.

Our news partners at WCBE have more information on the report from the CDC and the input of one of the nation's largest teachers unions at www.wcbe.org/post/teachers-union-head-examples-success-and-trust-key-reopening-schools.

IN-PERSON HOMEWORK HELP NOW AVAILABLE AS COLUMBUS LIBRARIES REOPEN THEIR DOORS:

Our partners at the Columbus Metropolitan Library are also re-opening their doors for browsing and limited services, including in-person Homework Help.

Starting today, all library locations are open for limited services, allowing patrons to come in to browse the shelves to pick out books, pick up items on hold, use a computer (60-minute limit), print, copy, scan and fax.

CCS students can also get in-person Homework Help after school at the Karl Road and Reynoldsburg branches. Online Homework Help is available 7 days a week on the library's website at www.columbuslibrary.org/school-help.

Face coverings are required to enter, covering both the mouth and nose and fitting snugly. Children 5 and older are required to wear a face covering. Disposable face masks are available to customers.

Our partners also remind us that children under the age of 7 must be accompanied by someone 16 or older.

At times, there may be limits on the number of people in the library to ensure effective social distancing. Staff will let patrons know if they need to wait to enter.



ALL CCS FAMILIES TO RECEIVE NEW ROUND OF P-EBT BENEFITS WITH MONEY TO BUY FOOD:

A new round of the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) Program will soon be headed to the homes of Columbus City Schools families with additional money to buy food, according to our partners at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS).

By mid-February, the families of students enrolled in Columbus City Schools in October and November will receive this 3rd Round of the P-EBT. Unlike previous benefits, this round includes students in Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K through 12th Grade).

Ohio was one of the first states approved to issue this latest next round of P-EBT benefits. The per-day amount has been increased under a recent Executive Order from President Biden. The total amount a family receives is based on the number of days their child(ren) did not receive a breakfast or lunch in a school setting because we were in remote learning.

P-EBT cards will be coming in the mail, based on the address listed in our Infinite Campus/ Parent Portal. New cards are being sent and, unlike last time, families are encouraged to keep these cards for future added benefits.

By Mid-February, families will receive P-EBT benefits for October-November, then they will get new amounts added to the cards monthly for the rest of the school year. December's benefit will be issued in late February, January 's benefits will be issued in late March, February's benefits in late April, and so on.

Families will be mailed monthly notices to explain the P-EBT benefit amounts. When possible, ODJFS will add students' P-EBT benefits to families' regular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits which are accessed through the Ohio Direction Card.

The state has a new P-EBT Customer Service line to help families. Call 1-866-244-0071 (press option 1). More information can be found online at www.ohiopebt.org.

CCS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHOICE FAIR GOES VIRTUAL:

Columbus City Schools will hold its 2021 Elementary School Choice Fairs virtually later this month, as the lottery application period opens for our elementary families. During the Elementary School Choice Fair, families can log in online and talk directly with staff from each of our schools to learn more about what they have to offer.

The Elementary School Choice Fair will be Wednesday, February 17, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. There's no need to register ahead of time. Families will be able to log in at the scheduled time to talk live via Zoom with the principal and school staff.

The lottery application period for elementary school students is now open and closes on March 31, 2021. You can get information on our School Choice and lottery process - and watch recruitment videos from many of our schools - by visiting www.ccsch.us/schoolchoice.



OSU SOCIAL CHANGE TO SPOTLIGHT CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN COLUMBUS:

Our partners at The Ohio State University Office of Student Life's Social Change department are hosting a special midday summit next week to spotlight issues related to Young Men of Color in Columbus.

The We MOB (Motivating Our Brothers) Virtual Summit will feature several speakers, including local motivator Terry "Nunnie" Green, OSU's Chief Diversity Officer Dr. James Moore, David Fletcher, and Dr. Tony Anderson (Assistant Principal at our Ft. Hayes Arts and Academics High School).

Come prepared to participate - this summit is interactive and features gift cards to some of the most active participants.

The We Mob Summit is Monday, February 15, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Zoom meeting ID is 697 718 4882 and the password is 1111.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Make sure your school calendar is up to date. Below are a few upcoming days to keep in mind:

- Monday, Feb 15: Parent Teacher Conferences (No Classes or Distance Learning)
- Wednesday, Mar 24: Records Day (No Classes or Distance Learning)

SHARE YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION UPDATES:

Please share this Engagement Update with the families and stakeholders you serve. During this historic school year, it's important we communicate as much as possible to as many people as possible - in as many languages as possible - about the steps being taken in Columbus City Schools to support our students and engage our families.

Please share your updates with us at Engage@columbus.k12.oh.us.