

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Update for January 11, 2021

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

SUPERINTENDENT ENGAGES FAMILIES AND STAFF TO PREPARE DISTRICT FOR SAFE RETURN TO CLASSROOMS IN FEBRUARY:

As students returned to remote learning this past week after our two-week winter break, Columbus City Schools Superintendent Dr. Talisa Dixon is engaging families, staff, and our community partners to prepare for the anticipated safe return to classroom learning as early as February 1.

Started last Thursday, Dr. Dixon is joining our Virtual Family Engagement Sessions each Thursday for the next several weeks to share reopening updates, provide insight on health and safety protocols, and listen to families' concerns.

ANTICIPATED TARGET DATE FOR RETURN: FEBRUARY 1

During the first session, Dr. Dixon shared that our earliest target date for students and staff to safely return to their school buildings in a blended learning model (two days in school and three days at home per week) is Monday, February 1.

The February 1 date is tentative as we continue to monitor public health data and work diligently to solve logistical issues that limit our ability to bring all students back to school buildings safely.

The return to the classroom would include students in our Career and Technical Education programs at Columbus Downtown High School and the Fort Hayes Career Center.

A final decision is expected in mid-January.

WORKING ON TRANSPORTATION LOGISTICS:

One of the most significant issues to be resolved, shared Dr. Dixon, is transportation and limits on busing capacity.

First is a national shortage of bus drivers, faced by CCS and many other districts. Second are limits due to public health guidance on how to most safely transport students. Current guidance is limited to one student per seat on a bus, which reduces the capacity of a typical school bus from more than 60 riders to just 21.

In a typical school year, our buses transport nearly 40,000 students daily to CCS, charter, and non-public schools across the city. Our Transportation team is working through routing, staffing, and alternative options, with hopes to finalize plans in the coming weeks.

GETTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS READY:

Our recent Virtual Family Engagement Super Session with Dr. Dixon focused on how our Operations teams have been dedicated to getting our school buildings ready for the safe return of students and staff.

Working with our health and safety experts, the teams have identified eight indicators to assure school building readiness. These indicators meet all of the recommended health and safety guidelines that are necessary to operate our schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Signage Installed for Social Distancing and Face Coverings:** All school buildings must have signage installed to show appropriate social distancing and the requirement to wear face coverings. Signage should be apparent on floors, walls, and doors throughout the building.
- **PPE Delivered and Available:** All school buildings must have at least six school weeks worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) available on-site, including staff and student masks, disposable gloves, bottles of hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. Special education areas must also have additional PPE, such as face shields, clear face coverings, and gowns.
- **Plexiglass Barriers Installed Everywhere Necessary:** All school buildings must have plexiglass barriers installed where six feet of social distancing is not possible and in common areas such as the school office.
- **Furniture Arranged for Social Distancing:** All school buildings must have furniture arranged to accommodate six feet of social distancing. This includes desks or tables in classrooms and commons areas such as the cafeteria or library.
- **Excess Furniture Removed or Stored:** All school buildings must remove or store excess furniture that is not needed due to social distancing requirements. Furniture that is removed from the building will be stored in the District warehouse.
- **Facilities are Clean and Visually-Appealing:** All school buildings must be clean and visually-appealing daily. The custodial staff will ensure that the building is cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- **Classrooms, Hallways, and Common Areas are Free of Clutter:** All classrooms, hallways, and common areas in school buildings must be free of any clutter that could impede social distancing requirements and pose hazards for staff and students.
- **Health Separation Room Identified with Staffing Plan:** All school buildings must identify a health separation room, where a student or staff member who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms can wait until they are able to leave the building. The school should also include a plan on how the health separation room will operate.

The District's PPE supply includes more than 2,000,000 face masks (a combination of adult and children sizes), 66,000 gowns, 48,000 face shields, more than 100,000 disposable gloves, and a lasting supply of hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and sprays. And pre-made desk dividers for students and teachers have been distributed to classrooms across the District.

You can watch the recent Virtual Family Engagement Super Session with Dr. Dixon by visiting www.ccsosoh.us/Page/8212. Sign up for this week's Super Session at www.ccsosoh.us/rsyp.



SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD OF EDUCATION TO REVIEW SUSPENSION OF IN-PERSON ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES:

Also this coming week, Superintendent Dixon and the Board of Education will hold a special meeting to discuss the current suspension of in-person winter athletics and extracurricular activities due to COVID-19.

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health have extended the current Stay at Home Advisory until January 23. The Stay at Home Advisory, which began on November 20, was extended due to high COVID-19 case numbers and community spread and coincides with Governor DeWine's statewide 10 p.m. curfew.

In accordance with the continuation of the Stay at Home Advisory, Columbus City Schools has extended the suspension of all in-person athletic and extracurricular activities until January 23.

Dr. Dixon and several board members recently met with several student athletes, coaches, and parents to hear their concerns about the impact of a delayed or cancelled winter sports season.

The special board meeting to review the suspension is Tuesday, January 12, starting at 5:30 p.m.

PARTNERS WORK TOGETHER TO HELP THE CLASS OF 2021 EARN MILLIONS IN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS:

Columbus City Schools and our longtime partners at I Know I Can are launching a Virtual College Scholarship Workshop Series, free for all CCS college-bound seniors.

In recent years, our graduating seniors have earned tens-of-millions of dollars in scholarships and grants to attend college and universities across the country.

The series begins with a special Virtual Family Engagement Session - featuring many of our scholarship partners - on Tuesday, January 12, starting at 6:00 p.m. Seniors and their families - along with organization who are supporting our seniors during this year of remote learning - are encouraged to join us to learn about several valuable local scholarships and changes to the application process.

To sign up for the Virtual Family Engagement Session, visit www.ccssoh.us/rsvp.

Then, we will host two Scholarship Workshop sessions to help students begin the application process, with information on I Know I Can funding opportunities and the Columbus Foundation Scholarships. In both sessions, attendees will receive breakout-room support in completing scholarship applications. Students who would like assistance with more than one application are encouraged to register for both sessions

The first session is Tuesday, January 19, from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. The second session is Saturday, January 23, from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Register for all sessions at bit.ly/3nbXRA0.

WE CARE WEDNESDAY VOLUNTEERS “CHECK AND CONNECT” WITH THOUSANDS OF CCS FAMILIES BEFORE HOLIDAYS:

During this time of remote learning and closed school buildings, our teachers and staff have found creative ways to connect with students during online classes or with parents through virtual community meetings. Despite all these amazing efforts, we know that the absence of one-on-one direct connections can often leave our young people and families feeling isolated and disengaged.

That’s why we dedicated Wednesday, December 16, as “We Care Wednesday” with plans to call EVERY student household in our district. More than 750 volunteers made “check & connect” calls to hear directly from our families, check on their well-being, answer questions, and connect them with community resources and supports if needed.

We worked with our partners at Lutheran Social Services and the 2-1-1 community resource hotline to connect families who needed essential supports - such as food, shelter, or utility assistance - to local organizations who could help.

Families in need assistance of any kind were encouraged to call 2-1-1 (or 614-221-2255) to be connected with help. They could also go online to <https://lssnetworkofhope.org/211centralohio>.

No surprise - nearly half of the calls went to voice mail and volunteers left messages with information about 2-1-1. About a third of the calls were live connections.

Of those families our volunteers talked with, about two-thirds shared that they didn’t need any supports but appreciated having someone call them and check. One in ten of the families shared that they needed either social or emotional support. Another one in ten of the families indicated a need that required a follow-up by our school staff. Those responses were sorted and disseminated by building for further follow-up.

Looking ahead to future We Care Wednesdays, we are working on plans for making additional calls and considering other ways to connect with families and provide needed resources.

In Columbus City Schools, we want every student and family to know that they are valued and that we care... on Wednesdays and every day of the week.

LEARNING EXTENSION CENTERS REOPEN:

Learning Extension Centers (LECs) - safe, adult-supervised, welcoming spaces hosted by many of our community partners to provide students with free access to internet, learning devices, and school supplies for daily remote learning - are back open after our Winter Break.

Don’t forget: to help families find a LEC, our interactive online locator map at uses home addresses and filters by neighborhood, grade levels served, and the days and hours of operation. The map also includes COTA bus routes for families who may need transportation assistance. Use the map at www.ccsosoh.us/LearningExtensionCenters.

SPOTLIGHT: CENTRAL COMMUNITY HOUSE PARENT SUPPORT

Recognizing the challenges parents are facing during this pandemic-impacted year, our partners at Central Community House are offering a series of virtual parenting support sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Central Community House is a comprehensive community center serving the near east and near south neighborhoods of Columbus. Learn more about their services at www.cchouse.org.

The Parent Support Series will cover a number of different topics, including Rules and Routines, Health and Safety, You Don't Have To Do It All Yourself, Stress and Your Mental Health, Teaching Children Self, and Positive Communication.

SPOTLIGHT: RENTAL ASSISTANCE FROM FRANKLIN COUNTY

Our partners at Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services have relaunched the Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) Plus Rental Assistance program that provides rental assistance payments for eligible families struggling to meet rent or facing eviction.

Through PRC Plus, eligible families can receive up to two months of rental assistance (approximately \$1,500 per household).

This kind of help is much-needed to address the impending housing crisis and rental assistance challenge faced by many Columbus families due to the ongoing public health emergency.

Learn more and apply today at: <http://jfs.franklincountyohio.gov/PRC>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

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

- Monday, Jan 18: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Distance Learning, Offices Closed)
- Tuesday, Jan 19: Records Day (No Distance Learning)
- Wednesday, Jan 20: Start of Second Semester

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.