



December 3, 2020

Dear Community,

We have missed the 2nd through 12th grade students tremendously and have appreciated the open, honest communication that the community has had regarding any symptoms, illness, exposure and questions over the past few weeks away. Families have been consistently filling out health screening information, whether they are in-person or remote, and this information has helped us with our current decision.

The fourth block of the school year begins on Monday, December 7th, and the plan is to begin in-person learning again with all students back on campus. Starting a new block in person - getting to see and orient the students to new classes and teachers - is enormously helpful in easing the transition to remote periods away. As the students return to class next week, we will continue monitoring the health of our students and the faculty community. All protocols, including mask wearing and strict cohorting of students, will continue to be in effect.

Recognizing Uncertainty

We recognize that with the larger community spread in Denver, not all families will feel comfortable returning in person for the following two weeks. We honor and understand that choice during this difficult time when no decision seems quite right. The benefits and risks begin to share more equal weight as we look at the mental and social health of students and families, and weigh those challenges against the physical health risks in our community. Who knew we would each be asked such difficult questions? We continue to be affirmed that schools in general are not places of high transmission under controlled environments. As far as we know, we have not had in-school transmission of COVID-19.

As the winter season nears, and the cases in Denver are higher than hoped, we recognize that we have now reached a defining time of "Winter COVID," and as we move through winter, we expect that we will need to pivot between in-person and remote more frequently. We are doubtful that there will be a time when we can be in school for a ten week period without disruption as we were at the beginning of this year. This pivoting between in-person and remote will again be based on cases and exposures within the DWS community, our ability and capacity to monitor our community health and staff the school

appropriately, and metrics in Denver that would preclude us being together. It is our goal to be in-person when possible.

Community Responsibility

In order to bring students together next week we are asking the following in the realm of personal responsibility. If you are aware that you engaged in activities over the Thanksgiving week that put you at greater risk of COVID, or if there is any sickness or symptoms within your household - not just the student - please keep your child at home for 14 days following the activity or follow the health guidance listed below around testing when someone in your household is sick.

Our community has been so wonderful at sharing confidentially what is going on with them. This sharing and transparency helps boost our confidence in reducing spread within our school building. A sincere thank you all for being such tremendous community members!

New Procedure as Part of Health Screen

We are adding to our health screening new information that needs to be completed:

- If at any time this winter you choose for your student to stay remote while the school is in person, please choose “remote” at the end of the health screen. This will help us with attendance and making sure we know where all the students are. Please contact your ECE, class teacher, or Brie Kaiser in the High School, if you plan on keeping your child out over the next two weeks.

Our remote program is not intended for students to pick and choose on a day-by-day basis, as that compromises their education and our ability to teach them well. Remote programming at times when the school is in-person should be used when a student or family member is ill, when quarantined, or when the family has decided for themselves that the risks outweigh the benefits, and it is better to stay home. During the next two weeks leading up to Winter Break, we ask that you decide whether your child will attend or will not attend, on a week-by-week basis to avoid confusion and inconsistency.

In addition to this remote attendance option, you will now see on the health screening form that an additional question has been added. The question refers to health symptoms in the household and is stated this way:

- Are there COVID-19 symptoms in this student’s household(s)? If yes, stay home, contact Christa for direction.

If you answer yes to this question, it is assumed that a COVID test has been completed or is scheduled. Upon receipt of a negative result, forward that to Christa, and then the student can return to school. If the result is positive, isolation and quarantine protocol must follow.

Evaluation of the next two weeks

We are unsure whether we will have COVID cases in the community over the next two-week time period, or how many students will be attending in-person or remotely. We will use our experience of the coming days and weeks to make a determination about who is in-person, remote, or hybrid after Winter Break.

If we have any health information that needs to be shared as we venture into this Winter COVID phase of learning, we will of course keep you all informed.

In Love, Light and Health,

Kelly Church, on behalf of the COVID Task Force