



December 18, 2020

Dear Lawrence Public Schools community,

As we approach the winter break next week, I want to wish you very happy holidays and share our plans to bring a small group of high needs students back in person, beginning next month.

We are currently hard at work preparing to return a very limited number of high needs students -- operating under enhanced health and safety protocols and new access to on-site testing -- to selected schools on January 19. This group will include some students with significant special education needs, as well as some newcomer students at the earliest stages of learning English. This is a small but crucial resumption of some essential in-person services and instruction that cannot be sufficiently delivered remotely.

Following a successful return of this initial group of students, additional high needs learners are scheduled to return on February 1, and on March 1. Important things to note include:

- Families of students invited to return on January 19 are in the process of being contacted directly now; again, this is a very limited first phase based on matching of student need and staff availability
- In addition to standard protocols for mask-wearing, distancing and hand-washing, enhanced personal protective equipment such as face shields and gloves will be provided
- Rapid antigen testing will be available for all onsite symptomatic staff and students to aid in faster recognition of potential cases of COVID-19

We recognize that the city continues to be challenged by high rates of COVID-19, and know all too well that changes to these plans could be necessary in the coming weeks. But as we enter the winter break we are confident in our planning, and excited to take this first step of an in-person return.

That return could be aided greatly by everyone continuing to do their individual part to observe responsible distancing, mask-wearing and hand-washing practices, which are still the best tools we have to reduce the spread. I hope we all take extra care over the busy holiday season to be safe.

Finally, two important notes about the weeks ahead:

- In late January we will begin hosting ACCESS assessments in person for students who are classified as English learners. This assessment is an important annual measurement of English language proficiency. Testing will be spread out over several months to prioritize health and safety, and schools will reach out to families of English learners directly regarding their student's specific schedules.
- We will have some changes to meal distribution during the break, as our extraordinary LPS nutritional services team enjoy the holidays with their families. Meal service will take place as normally scheduled this Tuesday, December 22 at all six sites, and on Tuesday, December 29 at LHS and the Guilmette only. There will be no service on the Fridays of Christmas and New Year's Day. Regular Tuesday/Friday service will resume at all previous sites starting January 5.

Thank you all again for your support throughout this year. I wish you all the happiest of holidays, and a wonderful winter break with your families.

Cynthia Paris
Superintendent of Schools