



Every child. Every opportunity. Every time.

**Kalamazoo Public Schools**

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January 3, 2022

Dear KPS Staff and Families:


Happy New Year! I hope that you were able to enjoy some time with family and loved ones over winter break. While 2022 will present many unknowns, I wanted to provide a follow-up to my Dec. 16 letter to reassure everyone that Kalamazoo Public Schools will continue to lead with health and safety in mind in an effort to minimize interruptions to the in-person learning experiences that have proven so valuable to our students. The district offered parents the choice of either in-person or virtual options this school year. This was completely a parent's choice. Over 100 students participating in the virtual school in the fall opted to return to in-person learning for trimester two. Although a handful of Michigan school districts have chosen to revert to remote learning, our district's decision to remain in person is based on the fact that our layered mitigation strategies have successfully resulted in extremely low school-based transmissions.

The district continues to collaborate with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department (KCHCS) to monitor recommendations from healthcare experts and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The layered COVID-19 mitigation strategies we've had in place all school year have not changed and provide the greatest level of protection for all variants, including Omicron.

## Layers of Defense Against COVID-19 in Schools

CDC recommended prevention strategies can be layered in different ways – the number and intensity of the layers can increase if community transmission increases

As community transmission increases, more holes appear in the defenses, meaning more layers of protection may be needed.



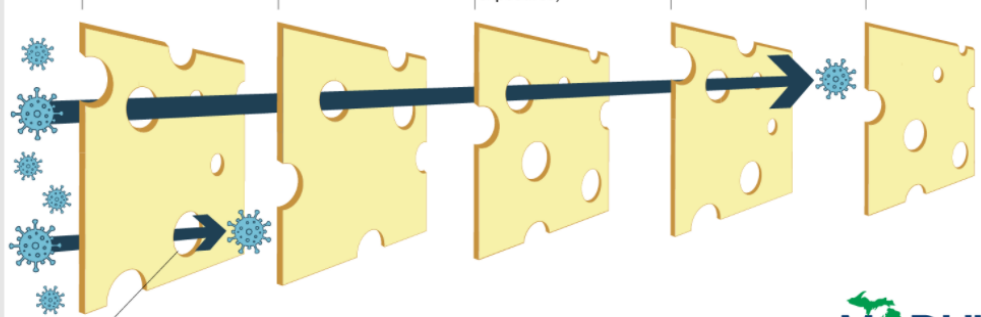
Promote **vaccination** against COVID-19 for eligible staff and students

Correctly and consistently use well-fitted **masks** that cover the nose and mouth

Arrange for **physical distancing**, including cohorting (grouping children together to reduce potential exposures)


Promote **screening and testing** for illness


Ensure **healthy environments and effective ventilation**



Holes in our defenses show that no one intervention is perfect, but layering them together increases success.

As the vaccination rate within a building or facility increases, fewer holes will appear in the defenses.





Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason

**Safety Begins at Home:** First and foremost, it is important that we all do our part to keep healthy, which includes self-checks at home every day. Students and staff who are experiencing the following symptoms are required to stay home: Cough, temperature of 100.4° or higher, chills, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nasal congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. If an unvaccinated child is exposed at home, they must quarantine before returning to school.

**Universal Masking:** KPS has required masks in our facilities since the beginning of the school year — regardless of vaccination status. For anyone who does not have a mask, the district will provide one.

**Vaccines:** KPS has hosted a number of vaccination clinics and will continue to partner with healthcare agencies to provide access to vaccines. Today, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Pfizer booster shot for children ages 12-15. Anyone who is fully vaccinated and asymptomatic does not need to quarantine if exposed to COVID-19. The CDC defined “fully vaccinated” in a recent press release as someone who has had both vaccines and the booster, if the second vaccine was more than six months ago.

As a reminder, we are hosting a COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot clinic this Saturday, Jan. 8, at Hillside Middle School, 1941 Alamo Ave. The clinic will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and you can pre-register for a time [here](#). A second clinic will be held on Jan. 29 at the same time and location. Please see the attached flyer for further information.

**COVID Reporting Protocol:** If a staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19, please contact your school and complete this [form](#). You will be contacted by a KPS nurse, who may ask for additional information and provide guidance.

\*\*\*\*\* **NEW MITIGATION STRATEGIES** \*\*\*\*\*

**KPS Events:** Events that include attendees outside of KPS students or staff will be limited to fewer than 100 people for the month of January. Schools will communicate about sporting events, fine arts programs, and other scheduled programs. Some events may be postponed or held remotely, while others will continue with limited capacity. We will revisit this decision for February.

**Notifications:** As outlined in my Dec. 16 letter, we made a minor adjustment to our positive COVID-19 notification process. Individuals identified as close contacts will still receive a personal phone call. The entire school community will receive only an email message.

**Test-to-Stay:** As mentioned in my Dec. 16 letter, in collaboration with the MDHHS and the KCHCS, KPS is participating in a pilot program called *Test-to-Stay*. This program began today and is being implemented in response to requests by parents who have been burdened by quarantine requirements as well as the district’s desire to keep students in school when possible. The *Test-to-Stay* pilot program allows unvaccinated students and adults to receive antigen tests at school after a school-based exposure. Students will need to have a signed permission slip to participate. They will receive antigen tests at school after a school-based exposure. They can continue to stay at school as long as the tests are negative. We have received a limited supply of antigen tests to launch the pilot program and additional tests were ordered months ago. Due to the national supply chain issues with testing kits, we may not be able to implement this with fidelity.

**MI Backpack Home Test Program:** The district has applied for rapid home tests through the MDHHS MI Backpack Home Test program. Once received, free antigen tests will be made available on a voluntary basis to KPS employees and families who would like to have a COVID-19 test kit at home. *However*, the home test results cannot be accepted as proof of a negative test for return to school or work, because the district cannot verify the test validity (date taken and person taking the test).

This letter will be posted on the KPS website. We will be updating our Health and Safety guidelines to reflect these changes by the end of the week as well as adding an FAQ document. We are grateful for your collaboration as we continue to navigate the unexpected with COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rita Raichoudhuri', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri  
Superintendent

Additional resources:

[KPS Health and Safety Guidelines webpage](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

[Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department](#)