

Hello Team BPS,

I hope that Friday's snow day treated you well and you were able to rest at least a little bit before tending to snow removal or other family duties. It is often said that cancelling school for snow is one of the most difficult decisions a superintendent has to make but let me tell you this one was easy! The forecast was clear and we were able to make the call with a lot of advanced notice.

As we head back to school this week, I wanted to share a few updates. I've been in communication with the Boston Public Health Commission (BPCH), Mayor Wu and our team at BPS all weekend to monitor our current situation with regard to staff, health and safety, and operations. We are thankful to Mayor Wu and Dr. Ojikutu and Dr. Sanchez for their continued support of BPS!

The team met again this afternoon to review the anticipated staff absences for tomorrow and plan for coverage. We will continue to meet twice daily, and speak more frequently with school leaders, until we get through this current surge.

## **MASKS**

I have been following the news on the masks provided by DESE and I want you to know that BPS takes the claims very seriously. We are ordering masks recommended by the Boston Public Health Commission and the same ones worn by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in the City of Boston. We partnered with the Boston Teachers Union on the review of these masks this past week. This order has been placed and will be delivered to you as soon as we have the masks in our possession. We will provide you with a specific date once the vendor provides us with the delivery schedule. We are planning to provide these masks in times of surge for our staff and medical grade surgical masks for students whenever we deploy surge protocols now and into the future. I sent a note to School Leaders tonight to ask them to use the blue medical masks provided by BPS at the recommendation of BPHC for students over the next two weeks.

## **TESTING**

We have also heard your advocacy on a few key issues regarding COVID testing and are looking at our options, including expanding access to test-and-stay, increasing frequency of pool testing, and continuing to advocate for an opt-out approach. We submitted a surge request to DESE to ask for support and adjustments to our testing program. We don't have answers from DESE yet, but will keep you updated with these communications, so please continue to check your email frequently.

## **AIR QUALITY**

It will be cold this week but we want to remind you that one window per classroom opened three to four inches with the use of an air purifier and an open door is advised by BPHC to help with air flow. **You do not need to open more than one window 3-4 inches.** The heat in all buildings is turned up to 76 degrees. For any adjustments to temperatures, please contact the facilities department's environmental division. As a reminder, we have the **indoor air quality sensors** also monitoring air quality and temperatures in the classrooms. The environmental team is constantly monitoring and supporting where indicated and is making necessary adjustments.

We are monitoring the temperatures for Tuesday with the City Emergency Management Team and Mayor Wu. We will keep you updated if we determine any adjustments are needed to our school schedule. Please make sure that your students are properly dressed for this very cold weather.

Here are a few other updates and reminders:

- We have made the difficult decision to continue the current pause in **athletics** that started during the winter break. We will continue to monitor the situation and make decisions in consultation with BPHC.
- The Commissioner has **extended the ACCESS for ELLs testing window** through March 4, 2022, with return of test materials by March 8. This will delay the reporting of electronic ACCESS results by a total of six days until May 19. Print results will be available as previously announced on May 24.
- [DESE also announced](#) that the **emergency license** has been extended again and is now valid until *June 30, 2023*.
- **Vaccination Mandate, January 15th deadline:** If an employee has been advised by a medical professional to delay receipt of the vaccine due to a recent COVID infection, they should seek a reasonable accommodation from the BPS Office of Equity by submitting their supporting medical documentation and/or [completed form](#) to the [accommodations@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:accommodations@bostonpublicschools.org) inbox.

We will continue to keep you regularly updated as we get through this latest surge. Thank you for all that you're doing. I know this hasn't been easy, but just as we have before, we will get through it.

With gratitude,

Brenda