

Dear Parents and Families,

As we come to the end of the calendar year, I have some important information to share but first I want to thank everyone for all that you have done to support our students and each other under challenging and constantly changing circumstances. Our students, staff, families and community have been resilient, understanding and flexible and I am proud of all of the growth and good work that has resulted. I encourage everyone to stay focused and finish the calendar strong and am excited about all that we will achieve together during the rest of the school year.

As for the news and updates:

### Masks

This is just a reminder that students must wear masks on buses and in school. Please be sure your student has a mask when they head to school. Disposable masks are available at the schools for students who forget them.

### Covid #s

As you know, the number of school Covid cases typically mirrors the community spread. New cases in Manchester have been slowly rising with the number of new cases per 100,000 up to 25.6 new cases per 100,000 over the past few weeks which puts us in the red. We continue to implement our mitigation strategies while also trying to keep students in school using screen and stay. You can monitor cases in MPS using our [district Covid dashboard](#) which is updated whenever there is a case.

### Buses

As you know, we are experiencing a shortage of bus drivers which has led to buses being late multiple times. The bus company has been reviewing bus counts and trying to collapse routes in order to avoid buses being uncovered. More information on revisions to bus assignments will be shared after the first of the year. We appreciate everyone's patience and know that this creates significant challenges for students and families and are working to get it corrected.

### School Holidays in December

The following schedule will be in place for December:

Thursday, December 23, 2021 Abbreviated Day

*MHS dismissed at 11:00 AM*

*Bennet, Illing, MMA and full-day Preschool dismissed at 11:45 AM*

*Elementary schools dismissed at 12:30 PM*

Friday, December 24 - Friday, December 31 Schools Closed - Winter Break

Monday, January 3, 2022 Schools Reopen

Thursday, January 6, 2022 Schools Closed - Three Kings Day

Inclement weather

Just a reminder that if schools are closed due to snow, we will make up the days at the end of the year. There will not be remote learning on snow days as that is not permitted by the CSDE.

Attendance

At the Board of Education meeting earlier this week I gave a data update including chronic absenteeism statistics. Almost 30 percent of our students are absent at least 10 percent of the time. That includes both excused and unexcused absences, and clearly many of these are unavoidable due to illnesses and other unavoidable circumstances. But it's a dramatic increase from pre-pandemic levels and I encourage everyone to make every effort to be sure your children are in school as often as safely possible.

Again, I appreciate your flexibility and partnership.

Happy Holidays

Sincerely,

Matt Geary