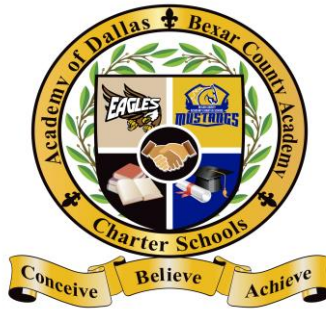


FROM THE DESK OF

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Dear Academy of Dallas Public Charter School's Community:

Coronavirus Update:

As we reflect on the challenges of COVID-19 in 2021, and move forward into the new year of 2022, the safety of our scholars, parents, teachers, staff, and community stakeholders is our first priority.

At this time, we will proceed with in-person learning and continue to align our safety protocols and preventive measures with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12. We understand that the state of Texas lifted the mask mandate to comply with Governor Greg Abbott's Executive Order on June 4, 2021. Additionally, "no student, teacher, parent, staff member or visitor may be required to wear a face covering." Academy of Dallas Public Charter School aims to ensure that no one will be treated any differently based on their decision to wear or not wear a mask (*optional*) for the school year. School systems must allow individuals to wear a mask if they choose to do so.

AOD's leadership team is also aware of the Omicron variant sweeping the United States just as most school systems are returning from a week long (or more) winter break.

And while there is still a lot we do not know about Omicron, according to the CDC "we do know it has surpassed Delta as the main source of new cases and it is the most contagious variant yet." While we know a lot about what it takes to operate schools safely in a global pandemic, the unpredictable behavior of this virus is once again putting education leaders in the bullseye of some stressful and difficult decisions.

To help school administrators prepare for January when scholars and staff return from holiday break, we have put together a guide to key decisions around school operations, instruction, and the health and safety of scholars and staff.

The CDC's recommended "protections for schools haven't changed, but rather become more urgent: universal masking and vaccination of children and adults, systemic testing and tracing infections, keeping at least 3 feet of distance indoors, practicing good hygiene among students, and sanitation and ventilation of buildings."

CONCEIVE. BELIEVE. ACHIEVE.

CDC (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools.

Key Takeaways:

- Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta and/or Omicron variants, CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.

The health and safety of our scholars, educators and communities must remain our first priority as we attempt to emerge from this pandemic. The district will continue to encourage good health and safety habits.

Dr. Ross F. Williams Jr.
Superintendent