



March 9, 2021

Dear CPS Community,

It's been a year since CPS operated "normally," so it's with eager but cautious excitement that I write to inform you of **our decision to open up our building for more in-person activity following Spring Break.**

What follows provides the rationale for this decision, along with an overview of our building reentry strategy. In order to give you as much notice as we can, we share this condensed plan now. More specific procedures and protocols will be provided over the coming weeks, pending affirmation by our Board of Trustees.

### **Rationale**

After careful consideration by our Admin Team and Board Executive Committee, the decision to bring more students and employees back is informed by the following realities:

- **The growing consensus from medical and public health experts asserts that reopening school buildings can happen** as schools are not the site of COVID transmission when well-established safety measures are in place, and because young children aren't as efficient COVID spreaders as adults and teenagers. We are not in the clear completely as community COVID spread still takes place, but schools don't seem to be the source.
- **We've seen a shift in majority sentiment at CPS about returning to our building.** Based on surveys conducted through the fall, more than half of CPS parents, caregivers, and employees expressed deep reservations about returning in-person through the first half of the school year. More recently, based on polls conducted during grade-level meetings for families and a faculty/staff professional day, around 75% of parents, caregivers, and employees in our community expressed some level of readiness to return for in-person instruction.
- **While academic and attendance data we've collected to-date indicate strong levels of student growth and participation at CPS, our students have generally struggled with severely limited opportunities for social interaction with peers throughout the pandemic.** This point was emphasized by a number of parents across grade-level meetings a few weeks ago. Operating in-person will allow us to tackle growing concerns about the adverse impacts on our children of over-abundant screen time and excessive time seated and inactive, as well as the lack of consistent, in-person socializing with classmates.
- **The presence of vaccines for everyone working in Philly schools, along with the steady increase of accessible vaccines for adults throughout our region, instill confidence in our ability to return in-person.** While there's still more to be done before COVID vaccines are ready for children, there is broad evidence confirming that the COVID vaccines currently available in the United States are highly effective at preventing COVID-19.

### **Return Overview**

- All Administrators and non-classroom staff members will return to the building during the week leading up to Spring Break (**the week of March 22nd**).



- Following the Break (**the week of April 5th**), all faculty members will report.
  - This will provide time to finalize arrangements, particularly in classrooms, before students return.
- Classes will resume post-Spring Break on **Tuesday, April 6th. All instruction will take place virtually that week.**
  - Unless public health conditions necessitate an adjustment, **VirtualPlus will not be held following Spring Break.**
- We will bring students back incrementally beginning **on April 13th.** (Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled for **April 12th.**) **PLEASE NOTE: you will have the choice of in-person or remote instruction for your child(ren).**
  - Waiting until after Spring Break to bring students back allows for:
    - all employees who want the COVID vaccine to receive their second dose
    - distance from Spring Break in the event that community members travel
    - more regular use of the outdoors with the weather warming up
    - ample time to prepare for the transition, mentally and emotionally in particular.
  - For families considering an in-person return, **we will only offer a 5 day/week option.**

### **Protocol Summary**

- Face masks must be worn properly by all in the building except at approved times (e.g. mealtimes).
- Six feet of distance between individuals will be maintained whenever reasonably possible.
- Hand washing and surface sanitizing will take place routinely and frequently.
- Well-planned protocols for contact tracing and swift isolation will be implemented in the event of COVID exposure or positive COVID case.
- A note regarding travel:
  - While Gov. Wolf has updated State travel guidelines making them less restrictive, we still must be wary of what community members do wherever they are, home or away. Thus we will ask all families and employees to 1) sign a health expectations pledge even if you already signed it prior to the start of the school year, and 2) let the School know if you plan on traveling over Spring Break or at any point prior to the end of the school year.

**Please be on the lookout for building reentry updates as we approach Spring Break. We will review the plan in detail during Family Night on March 25th.**

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Such a big chunk of our lives has been upended over the past 12 months, but Spring is coming. Returning to our building in greater numbers to finish the school year is a promising development, and the longer days and warmer weather that lie ahead offer a sign that brighter times are on the horizon.

Many thanks for your attention to this notice, and we so appreciate your resilience and ongoing support of each other throughout these challenging times.

More detail to come,

*Eric Jones, Head of School*