



January 2, 2022

Dear MRH Families:

Welcome to the new year! While 2022 will present many unknowns, we still have much to look forward to and to celebrate. We have our community and each other! We are aware that there are many ongoing questions regarding how the district should respond to the ongoing pandemic and the newest Omicron variant. Regionally and locally the district continues to observe data regarding the positivity and transmission rates as a result of COVID-19. The rapid increase in data, fueled by the emergence of the Omicron variant, has likely caused concern for many of our families. Rest assured, the district will continue to make decisions with the safety of our students at the forefront. We know that our schools are the safest and most controlled environments and that our current mitigation measures have proven to be successful.

Recently, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released new quarantine and isolation guidelines for implementation. The district's COVID-19 Response Team met to review the [CDC recommendations currently being adopted by the STL County Department of Public Health](#). While the Department has provided new guidelines for consideration, school districts maintain discretion regarding which guidelines they adopt and when.

The MRH School District will be adopting the new guidelines for 5-day isolation periods and 5-day quarantines beginning the second semester (week of January 17). Our last student attendance day for the first semester is Thursday, January 13, 2022. Therefore, any positive test result and/or symptom onset date starting Friday, January 14 will be handled according to the new guidance issued by the CDC.

As we prepare to implement the new guidance, there are important issues that require additional time for problem solving:

- The availability of antigen testing
- The feasibility of obtaining a return-to-school letter from a medical provider

In addition, there are current challenges throughout the region that make it difficult to implement the new guidance immediately:

- Testing sites are at capacity and the wait times are long;
- The positivity rates in the 63143 and 63117 zip codes have doubled in the past two weeks;
- The positivity rate at MRH is at an all-time high due to the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant; and
- Holiday gatherings will result in a 2-week spike in cases throughout the region.

Our school district leadership team will be working diligently to continuously monitor district data and to identify additional mitigation measures resulting from the data. Currently the district is exploring several new mitigation measures and once solidified information will be shared with our community. Again, we recognize the concerns that the Omicron variant has created for each of you and the decisions you and your family are faced with making. There have been many questions regarding whether families can keep their children home the first two weeks of school even if they have not tested positive for COVID-19. While deciding whether to send a student to school is the parent's decision, the absence is considered unexcused by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).



# Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

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Office of Dr. Bonita Jamison, Superintendent

These past few years have not been easy, but together we can continue to ensure the safety of our community. I look forward to partnering with each of you in the new year and as always, it is a great day to be a Blue Devil!

Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bonita Jamison'.

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