



December 30, 2021

## **Superintendent's Message: Return from Winter Break Information**

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, Students and Community Members,

I hope you are enjoying a healthy and relaxing time with your families during the holidays and winter break.

We are gearing up for reopening next week, with elementary students returning on Jan. 3 and secondary students and all of SMASH on Jan. 4, 2022.

As you are likely aware, the Covid-19 omicron variant has become prevalent in our communities, with increasing new cases every day the past few weeks. We are concerned about this highly contagious variant as we return to school; however, we have plans to continue our effective mitigation strategies to ensure a safe school experience.

Here is important information to help keep staff and students healthy and in school:

- **If a staff member or student has any symptoms, including cold or flu-like symptoms, please do not come to school / work until COVID-19 has been ruled out through a PCR test.**
  - For the safety of our community, students who are out during the first week of school due to possible exposure or illness will not be penalized for absences.
  - On-campus Covid testing will be required on the regular site testing day, unless previous arrangements were approved last semester. If your student is absent on their school site's testing day and misses the test, they will be required to submit an outside PCR test in order to return to campus. A student missing a campus test and not returning with PCR test results from outside, will be sent home until an outside test result is provided. This testing is important to identify any asymptomatic positive cases to reduce potential spread of the highly transmissible omicron variant.
  - Students / staff missing school / work who are experiencing any symptoms, illness will receive an excused absence.
  - We continue to work hand-in-hand with the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association (SMMCTA) to ensure no student is penalized for COVID-related absences as we resume our PCR testing schedules to minimize positive cases at our facilities.
- **We highly encourage testing prior to returning to any of our campuses or offices.**
  - LA County has [testing sites](#) with available appointments or you may check with your health care providers or local pharmacies.
  - We are expecting to receive antigen testing kits for all students from the state thanks to an order by Governor Gavin Newsom. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) expects to deliver them to us early next week and we will inform you of the distribution plan for each site.
- **The next vaccination clinics on SMMUSD campuses, open to everyone, registration recommended, are:**

- Jan. 4, JAMS - 2:30 - 5 p.m
    - Jan. 5, McKinley - 2:30 - 5 p.m.
    - Jan. 6, Malibu HS - 2:30 - 5 p.m.
  - See my letter with details, links / QR codes to register: [English](#) / [Spanish](#). Open to anyone aged 5 and older, first dose, second dose or booster for SMMUSD clinics, offering Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.
  - Virginia Ave Park in Santa Monica is offering free vaccinations on Dec. 30, 2021 from 3 - 6 p.m. Information flyer: [English and Spanish](#).
  - Additional vaccination clinics throughout the county are available through <https://myturn.ca.gov/>.
  - Vaccinations are the best defense against serious illness and slowing the spread of this highly contagious virus.
- **Quarantine guidelines**
    - We are aware of the reduced quarantine guidelines announced by the Centers for Disease Control, a reduction from 10 days to five days, and awaiting direction from our local guiding health agencies.
    - We remind you that all districts are required to follow the guidance and direction of their county health department. In our case, we follow the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH); we are allowed to be more restrictive than federal, state, and county regulations, but never less. This includes recommendations regarding length of isolation and quarantine. We will inform you of any changes to our current practices as they are directed by LACDPH.
    - If any SMMUSD community member (including staff and students) is fully vaccinated, (meaning greater than two weeks since the second dose and within six months of the second or subsequent doses), then they will not need to quarantine if exposed to a positive case and they remain asymptomatic.
    - If your student has been vaccinated please share that information (copy of vaccination card) with your school health office so they are aware in the case of a quarantine. If you are a staff member please share vaccination updates with human resources.
  - **Travel: domestic and international guidelines and tips**
    - We continue to follow CDC guidelines with regard to travel. Please take a look at their information, also posted on [www.smmusd.org/Coronavirus](http://www.smmusd.org/Coronavirus). LACDPH has travel tips online: [English](#) - [Spanish](#).

We are sincerely disappointed over the turn of events with omicron, as it was beginning to feel more like pre-pandemic times. We continue to plan for that day with some offramping safety protocol measures as have been discussed previously and will present recommendations to the school board at a meeting in January. At this time, we will continue with all of our safety and health protocols that have been in place for this school year until a change is authorized by the school board. Emerging from this pandemic will take a concerted community effort that includes increased vaccination rates for everyone five and older.

This is the time we rise together as a community for the best interests in health and safety of our students, staff, parents and community members. Let's join together and we can make a difference!

Best wishes for a healthy and enjoyable new year!

Sincerely,  
Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent