

## Family Update - 12.18.20

### Dear MPS Families:

Reminder that if you haven't already done so, please [complete your Application for Educational Benefits today!](#) The deadline for completing the application has been extended to Jan. 4.

Winter Break message from Superintendent Graff:

Dear MPS Family,

It's hard to think about what to say as we reach the end of 2020. This has been a year unlike any other many of us have experienced either personally and professionally. Today, as I reflect both on the past 12 months along with the themes of joy, love, compassion and new beginnings that underscore this time of year, I find myself in awe.

Awe at the strength of our MPS community, that has weathered unthinkable disruption this year. Awe at the resilience of our students who have faced challenges too numerous to mention. Awe at the sheer determination and perseverance of the human spirit. And awe at the possibilities and promise that await us in 2021.

As Oprah says, as we close out this year there is something that I know to be true. Even the most indomitable spirit, the most valiant fighters, and those with the most iron clad wills eventually need to rest. And so, as we head into break and close out 2020, my sincere wish is that each of you will find time to close your eyes, breathe deeply and exhale. Seek out moments that bring you joy in the midst of your current circumstance and if all is rosy in your world, don't miss an opportunity to spread joy and cheer to someone else who may be in short supply.

Thank you for being a member of the MPS family. We look forward to being together again in the new year.

Ed Graff  
Superintendent

This update includes information on:

- Governor Walz's executive order on schools
- Registering for virtual after-school programs
- Free holiday meal boxes for kids...and adults!
- Winter Break resources and district office closures
- Reminder about school open houses

### **Governor Walz's executive order on schools**

Earlier this week, Governor Walz announced a new executive order to prioritize getting elementary students back to class in person. The Governor's priority of returning to in-person classes for our youngest learners as soon as we can safely manage it aligns to our previously outlined approach.

There's a lot we still don't know about this order, so we are seeking greater specificity and answers to clarifying questions we have. Here's what we know right now about the order:

- Encourages phased return of grades PreK through 5
- Provides for teacher planning days before students return
- Target date for return of Jan. 18; not a mandate, but an option
- State-provided, bi-weekly COVID testing for staff

**MPS previously communicated the soonest we would bring students back would be around the semester break, which is Feb. 1, and we are currently planning to stick with that timeline.**

Based on the Governor's Order, that would mean prioritizing a return for elementary students with a phased return by grade or cohorts of students. Our final recommendations, however, will be informed by more meetings over Winter Break with state and local health officials, as well as continued monitoring of our own data dashboard. **We will be publishing a potential timeline the week of Jan. 4 for a return to in-person school.**

Here are a few additional planning items we will be working on over the next few weeks:

- Continuing building readiness walk-throughs, cleaning and assessments
- Formally asking families (beginning with PreK-5) to register their intent to return to in-person classes or to stay in distance learning
- Sending letters to impacted staff about shifting from remote to on-site work
- Publishing updated FAQs to help families make informed decisions
- Hosting ongoing discussions with parents, staff and community partners

We know there are a lot of questions and uncertainty. We will continue working collaboratively with our regional partners and the State to get answers, and we'll our community informed throughout the process.

### **Registering for virtual after-school programs**

GEMS-GISE STEM Academy afterschool registration is currently open. Spring programming runs Jan. 11 through April 1.

Just like GEMS-GISE Summer programs, the Afterschool GEMS-GISE STEM Academy focuses on academic standards and explorations of science and mathematics through project-based and problem-based learning experiences. Classes integrate engineering and technology concepts.

These highly engaging STEM courses will be available through distance learning. GEMS-GISE coaches will be teaching the courses live online through a hands-on project based approach exploring Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

[Learn more and sign up today!](#) All course supplies and materials will be provided.

### **Free holiday meal boxes for kids...and adults!**

Mark your calendars! All [MPS free meal box pick-up sites](#) will be open Dec. 21-22 and Dec. 29-30 with regular hours. Sites will reopen on Jan. 5 and resume their normal schedule. During winter break, families can pick up free meal boxes for youth and something special for the adults too! For two weeks in a row, MPS will be offering Free Holiday Meal Box for Adults.

#### **Holiday Meal Boxes for Adults:**

- Pick-up days are Dec. 21 or 22 and Dec. 29 or 30. Plan ahead! Pick-up sites will be open just these four days during the holiday weeks.
- First Come First Served—each week there will be 4,000 Holiday Meal Boxes for Adults available at all 27 sites. There will be no super snack boxes these two weeks.
- Holiday boxes include turkey, mashed potatoes, carrots, green beans, apples, dinner rolls, and a pie. There is enough to feed two adults for about a week. One holiday meal box per household.

For more information about holiday meal boxes for adults, [visit the Holiday Meal Boxes webpage](#). For general information about how and where to pick up free meal boxes for youth, visit the [MPS Culinary & Wellness Services website](#).

### **Winter Break resources and district office closures**

MPS is on Winter Break from Monday, Dec. 21, through Friday, Jan. 1. Classes resume via distance learning on Monday, Jan. 4. While many of the resources we normally share for break are unavailable due to COVID-19, several are still available to support students and families. Please [visit our Winter Break Resources webpage](#) for more information.

During winter break, tech support will be available Monday-Wednesday (Dec. 21-23 and 28-30) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. If your child is having problems with their Chromebook or iPad during this time, please call the IT Service Desk at 612.668.0088.

In addition, District Offices will be closed Dec. 24-25, 31, and Jan. 1. Student Placement will have reduced hours from XXX during Winter Break and will also be closed when District Offices are closed.

### **REMINDER: School Requests, Open Houses, and Virtual Kick-off recap**

Families can now [submit School Requests for the 2021-22 school year](#). Families that submit their school request by Feb. 7, 2021, will have the best chance of placement at their top-requested school.

Through Jan. 30, [schools will also hold virtual open houses](#) so families can discover what makes MPS schools a great option. In addition, you can watch our [Virtual Kick-off event](#) that provided helpful information about the School Request process and MPS's new community school and magnet offerings.