

February 1, 2021

Greetings Stokes School Families,

We sincerely apologize for not providing additional details in the letter of January 25, 2021. In our desire to share information with families on the date we promised previously, we inadvertently omitted a number of important details. Thank you to the families who brought this omission to our attention.

In summary, we will begin to bring groups of students back into the buildings on February 22nd to administer assessments that will inform the structure of our academic support and recovery programs, including summer programming. We will continue testing groups of students throughout the following few weeks. On March 22nd we will begin to bring small groups of our highest need students into the school buildings for supervised virtual learning. We are hopeful that as we progress, we can expand to more pods. However, because of social distancing requirements, it is very unlikely that we will be able to invite all of our students back into the buildings this school year. Nonetheless, once the weather breaks, we plan to use our outdoor spaces and invite additional students for activities such as socially distanced meet-ups and/or outdoor instruction.

Below you will find a full explanation of our plans as well as the reasons that led to our reopening decision.

Selection of a reopening model

Stokes School leadership team assessed a number of different reopening models before arriving at the decision to host small pods of scholars who will continue virtual learning on-site. While we explored other options that prioritized having more students in the building, staffing and space constraints remain major barriers. We selected the model to prioritize consistency in schedule and ensuring that students have access to their 'home' teachers.

Under the DC Health guidance of social distancing at least six feet, we are extremely limited in the number of students and staff that we can accommodate. Depending on the age group, we will have scholars in pods of between three and eight children. At this level, only a limited number of scholars can come to our school buildings on a given day. Although the East End Campus has more spacious classrooms, we currently face staffing capacity issues at both campuses that cap the number of scholars that we can supervise per campus. We hope in the coming months vaccines and implementation of this plan will ease some of these challenges.

In our current plan, returning students will be in small pods. They will have breakfast and lunch in their classrooms, and they will not interact with any other students in the school, including during recess. With this type of pod system, if a student or staff member tests positive, the entire pod will shut down. To be prepared, and in compliance with DC Health guidance, we have also considered the health suite capacity at both campuses. The health suite at the Brookland Campus is very small. It does not allow for the nurse to socially distance if there is a student in the office. The DC Department of Health cannot send a nurse under these circumstances. We have contacted the DC Department of Health to determine whether we can use another space in the building as a temporary health suite.

At our East End campus, our new health suite is equipped and ready to serve scholars. We will also have a school nurse who will be shared by Maya Angelou PCS. The DC Department of Health recommends that all schools reserve one room per floor as an isolation room for students who are ill. This further limits the number of available classrooms.

Process of allocating limited seats

Members of our academic, student support, specialized education, and language learning staff have been meeting over a period of months to develop criteria to decide how to assess all scholars and equitably allocate these in-person learning spaces. We considered a number of factors that contribute to scholars being educationally at-risk. As part of this process, we considered students who have struggled with virtual learning both socially and academically, and families who have identified serious needs in the home.

Vaccines

Mayor Bowser has prioritized health care providers, essential workers (including educators), senior citizens, and other high-risk individuals in the city's vaccine plan. Staff and administration in PreK-12 public schools became eligible for vaccines on January 25, 2021. However, vaccine supply does not currently meet demand. There are hundreds of thousands of individuals who are now eligible to receive vaccines in the District of Columbia, and according to officials, the city currently receives 8,000-9,000 vaccines to administer per week. While DC Public Schools has partnered with Children's Hospital to administer vaccines and their employees began to receive vaccinations on January 25, 2021, the DC Public Charter School Board and the DC Charter Alliance have located an alternative provider for charter school employees. However, due to the vaccine scarcity, only charter school employees who are teaching or working at a school in-person by the end of February are eligible to receive vaccines at this time. There is also a natural timeline to receive both doses of the vaccine and for it to reach full efficacy. Therefore, most charter school employees will not be fully vaccinated for several months. The majority of Stokes School staff surveyed prefer to be fully vaccinated before resuming work in the school buildings. At present, fewer than five of Stokes School's staff members have received their first vaccination.

Several concerns raised by families mentioned DC Public Schools planned partial reopening on February 1st, and while we recognize there is a natural inclination to make comparisons, there are substantial differences in our approach and that of DCPS. Many of our peer language-immersion schools are pursuing tiered approaches that use small pods with a limited number of students returning to in-person learning. Others are offering hybrid models in late February and early March that utilize cohorts of students on particular days or weeks. All are continuing to utilize a virtual option for families that prefer for their children to remain at home.

A cycle that would bring all scholars to the school in groups of 20-30 would yield a rotation pattern that would be more disruptive than beneficial, in our assessment.

Educational Recovery Plan

We are working on an educational recovery plan that includes social emotional and academic elements. We are gathering data using classroom observation, one-on-one assessments with scholars, and upcoming standardized testing. We will use this information to build learning support plans for the duration of this school year, summer academic and enrichment programming, and an academic recovery plan for the next school year. This plan will include training our staff on the social emotional needs of our scholars. We know that information regarding next school year is important to families now as we approach the enrollment season. We are committed to sharing information with our community as soon as we can accurately do so, and we thank you for your understanding regarding the impacts of the unprecedented and ever-changing nature of the pandemic.

To hear more about our academic recovery plan, please join our town hall meeting on February 16th at 5:00 pm. The meeting zoom link will be shared in an upcoming weekly newsletter.

Parent Re-opening Task Force

We have heard clearly that *all* families are experiencing unprecedented need, and we know that all families want to have a voice as we move forward together. We are creating a Parent Task Force to assist administration with reopening plans. [Families can express interest here](#) and our Family Engagement Coordinator, Ana Maria Donado, anad@ewstokes.org, will follow up with you.

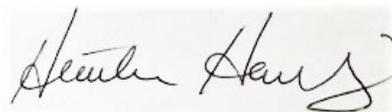
Our intention is to provide the best academic programming as possible for our scholars given current constraints, and to be as transparent as possible as we plan. We also have a duty to acknowledge the legitimate fears of our staff and to protect their well-being. We have worked for several months to put measures that will mitigate the risks of contracting COVID in our school buildings. We expect that staff vaccinations will alleviate many of the issues going forward.

We hope that you are keeping yourselves safe, healthy, and emotionally well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erika Bryant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Erika Bryant
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Harding". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the last name being more prominent.

Heather Harding
Chair, Board of Trustees