



Community **CONNECT**

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

February 2, 2021

A Message From David W. James, Ed.D.

Vaccines to Be Given Saturday ****A Shot in the Arm For APS***

The vaccinations for the coronavirus can't arrive soon enough so public school districts in our state can get some students back into classrooms for live, in-person learning. Akron Public Schools is among the first districts to be in line to administer inoculations this week.

Because of this, we believe we will be able to get some of our youngest learners back into classrooms by early to mid-March, if all goes as planned.

Governor DeWine had asked Ohio school district administrators to make a commitment to a return to the classroom in exchange for the vaccinations of staff. This agreement by Akron Public Schools puts us in position to see that our teachers and staff receive an early wave of a supply of vaccines. The plan makes sense. Inoculate teachers as early as possible, so families have a greater sense of well-being sending their kids back to the classroom.

It also gives our educators the same reassurance. But, keep in mind, with the vaccines currently available, recipients have to have two doses spread apart by three weeks. So, full inoculation won't actually be completed until a week after the second dose.

The Plan

This Saturday, Akron Children's Hospital staff will join us at our administration building (10 N. Main St.) to deliver vaccines into the arms of 780 of our teachers and staff who have requested them. This number, however, represents roughly a quarter of the total number of employees wanting the vaccine.

****It should be noted that teachers and support staff in our buildings come first. Central office administrators and support teams who do not have***



regular contact with students will receive inoculations AFTER our teachers have been vaccinated.

We hope to receive another delivery of vaccines next week, but the timeline on all of this is largely dependent upon how many doses we receive and when. Once the first doses are finally administered, we will wait another three weeks and then schedule round two.

We are excited to get students who desire to return to live, in-person learning back in our classrooms as soon as we can, as soon as our vaccinations are completed.

This is how phase one of our plan is designed to work APS has selected as its first group to be vaccinated (780 of them on February 6) teachers and support staff who work with children in kindergarten through second grade *and* students with the most pressing special needs. After this group receives its second inoculation, which should be around February 27, they will be prepared in a week to 10 days to receive K-2 and special needs students.

This plan would then be replicated for more and more grade levels as the number of doses of vaccines allows us to deliver. The vaccination process is exactly that -- a process. The variables in this include delivery date of vaccine and, most importantly, quantity of the serum.

We have 3,000 staff members to vaccinate, *twice*. So, for each teacher, there is a built-in period of at least four weeks between when he or she receives the first shot and when that employee can return to the classroom with children.

Once live, in-person does resume, we have in place in our schools every possible health and safety protocol to ensure the safest possible environment for students and staff. It begins from the moment children prepare to leave the house, to when they hop on the school bus and when they arrive.

All of the usual precautions are in play with masks, handwashing and distancing reminders placed around our buildings for everyone to see. We have done the rigorous two-step sanitizing of our buildings and our buses. Cleaning will be conducted daily to ensure high-touch surfaces are as safe as possible.

Drinking fountains will only be available for filling water bottles. Health clinics in each school are set up to triage students and staff in case anyone feels ill. This will address, immediately, any health concerns and the disposition of each 'patient.'

If I could somehow describe for you what the dynamics of the past year have looked like for us, I would probably use a live image of an amoeba. Often, when we finally get a good picture of what a solution may look like, the "problem" -- if you will -- changes its shape. With each change, we make the necessary calibrations and plan for the next step in this process of getting those students who are itching to return back for live, in-person learning.

Matters of public health are not to be trivialized. The processes cannot be minimized. This is a most complicated matrix of cause and effect, and it has a vital impact on the welfare of our children, their families and our teachers and

staff (and their families).

Again, our hope at this time is for some certainty on just how many vaccines may be in store for our teachers and staff. How many, and when -- two simple questions with a complex route to the answer.

Our website, [APS Learning 2020-21](#), continues to be updated with the very latest information. We hope this answers any questions you may have.

While being vaccinated is not a guarantee, it certainly does offer some peace of mind for our families who have needed some reassurance about the wisdom of restarting school as we knew it to be just a year ago.

Best wishes,



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Superintendent
Akron Public Schools

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