

Dear School Families,

I write today to update you about changes to the 2020-2021 School Calendar and the adoption of new gating criteria to guide district decision-making about safety and learning models. In addition, the district has created a temporary form for collecting reports of COVID-19 cases and quarantine information during Winter Recess while schools are closed.

SCHOOL CALENDAR CHANGES

The Lawrence Board of Education on Monday approved calendar changes recommended by the USD 497 and Lawrence Education Association's Negotiations COVID Subcommittee. The board added two staff professional development days, January 5-6, 2021, to the calendar by postponing until January 7, students' return to school following Winter Recess. The additional professional development will help support teachers in effectively instructing in-person and remote/distance learners.

In conjunction with this change, the board shifted the end of the high school second quarter from January 15 to January 20. High school finals will now be held January 15, 19 (a.m. only), and 20 (a.m. only). The middle school second quarter remains unchanged, ending January 15.

Here is the revised 2020-2021 Student Calendar. (attached)

NEW GATING CRITERIA & DATA DASHBOARD

Following its December 3, 2020, adoption of the Kansas State Department of Education's Kansas Schools Gating Criteria, the Lawrence school board on Monday finalized weightings for the tool's five criteria. They include the two-week cumulative county incidence rate (30%), two-week county percent positive case rate (30%), the trend in county incidence rate (20%), local/referring hospital capacity (15%), and student absenteeism (5%). Data sources include the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, LMH Health, and Lawrence Public Schools.

The administration continues to consider other important factors, including staffing availability and substitute fill rate, as it seeks to maintain safe learning environments for students and staff. You may find [USD 497's COVID Gating Criteria and a new, interactive data dashboard](#) on our website. Please note that the current operational risk level, according to the new gating criteria, is "phase yellow," which supports on-site and hybrid learning.

District administration will continue to use LDCPH's Smart and Safe School Reopening Guidance, and the recommendations of the Kansas State High School Athletics Association, when making decisions about student athletics and activities.

COVID CASE REPORTING DURING WINTER RECESS

During Winter Recess while our schools are closed, please use this [online form to report COVID cases](#) affecting students and/or staff members, as well as quarantine information. Contact your primary health care provider or LDCPH's Coronavirus hotline, 785-856-4343, with any questions about COVID symptoms and/or testing. When staff return, they will be in touch with you about your report.

The district remains committed to transparency in informing school families about reports of COVID cases on our campuses. In order to streamline this communication, beginning in January, you will receive a weekly email on Fridays about any cases reported during the week to your child's school. The district encourages school families to use our online resources, including a districtwide listing of reported cases and the data dashboard, for further information. Find both at www.usd497.org/Coronavirus.

Please continue to mask up, wash hands, stay at a safe distance from others, and stay home when ill to prevent the spread of COVID in our community.

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday season!

Sincerely,

Julie Boyle

Executive Director of Communications

Lawrence Public Schools