

Dear Manitou Springs School District Community,

I write this letter with three days remaining to the last week of school in the year 2020. It is hard to believe that March 13 was 9 months ago. In some ways, it feels like it was only yesterday. I know this letter is long, but please read to the end. Everything that is communicated is important.

When I accepted the position of Superintendent just 18 months ago, I never would have imagined that I would be leading in this role at the same time as a global pandemic. At the same time, there is not a day that goes by that I am not in awe of our community's willingness to do everything we can to navigate the challenges while simultaneously focusing on our students' needs and the realities of the public health circumstances (that impact every aspect of our lives).

Thank you to everyone (i.e., students grades 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, staff, and families) who completed the feedback surveys and continue to reach out to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas. It is important to note that there were some consistent themes across all groups:

- Regardless of the Instructional Model, Consistency Matters.
- Communication Matters (as timely and predictable as possible).
- Safety and Health Protocols are Critical.

Last night, during the monthly Board of Education work session, I shared the model we will begin with as we start the second semester (January 2021). This decision aligns to all three of the themes and a strong start for the second semester.

- **Staff Return:**
  - Remains the same--Wednesday, January 6
- **Student Return:**
  - Remains the same--Friday, January 8
  - Return to Remote Learning (All Grades)
  - Remote Learning from January 8-15
- **Monday, January 18: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Holiday:** No school.
- **Tuesday, January 19: Student Return to In-Person Learning**
  - MSES & UPES: Hybrid or Fully In-person (Final model will be communicated on January 5). Unfortunately, it is too early to make this determination.
  - MSMS & MSHS: Hybrid

\*See weekly calendar below.

#### *The Why?*

We want a strong start to the semester and 2021. With feedback and guidance from our Public Health officials, this period of time allows us to return to in-person learning just over 14 days after New Year's Day. The typical impact of significant holidays becomes apparent approximately 14 days after the holiday. We saw an uptick after Halloween. We saw a plateau after Thanksgiving. Let's work together to have a downward trend of community positivity rates.

In Remote Learning, schools are not closed. Students are learning from home, and teachers and staff are working extremely hard to remain connected to students and teaching at a high level (engagement, content, connection).

Starting with remote learning does require a model change on January 19. However, if we delayed the start to learning, we would need to move the end of the school year to the first week of June.

### **Wednesdays in the Second Semester**

From the surveys and ongoing conversations, we know that many staff members appreciated the Wednesday Staff Work/Students At-Home Days. These days were valued as professional development days. Thank you to our parents for supporting this transitional time for our staff. We also know that students have missed significant time with in-person learning to support this professional learning time. While these were weekly in the first semester, moving forward, these will now happen on:

- Wednesday, March 3
- Wednesday, April 7
- Wednesday, May 5

Principals will support with other ways to provide professional learning opportunities for their staff at the school level.

I know that every decision has an impact. Like Newton's Third Law, "To every action there is always opposed and equal reaction." During this pandemic time, what works well for one individual or group might have the opposite impact on another individual or group. This does not negate the significance of every decision. Please know that I do not take these decisions lightly....I never will.

### **FuelED Students and Parents**

To parents of students who are participating in FuelED, the start to the semester remains the same—Monday, January 11. We have appreciated the feedback you have provided about ways to better support you and your child during this time.

We will move all communication for students to the school principal. Kolleen Johnson will support schools with all technical needs associated with FuelED.

### **Grab-and-Go Meals During the Winter Break**

Our fantastic Nutrition Services Team will be providing Grab-and-Go meals on Monday, December 21 and Monday, December 28. Be sure to pick-up the meals they have prepared for your child (0-18 years old). You will receive 10 meals (5 breakfasts, 5 lunches) for each child.

Pick-up Locations:

- Manitou Springs Elementary School: 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
- Ute Pass Elementary School: 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

Here is a map of locations across the region: [Pikes Peak School Meals During the Winter Break](#)

### **A Strong Start**

After the Thanksgiving break, we have had two successful weeks (currently in the third week) of in-person learning at both MSES and UPES. This is a testament to our staff and community—who are willing to do what it takes to safely maintain in-person learning. This included:

- Remaining home if ill or exposed to someone who was positive with COVID or symptomatic and being evaluated for COVID. Completing the [COVID Intake Form](#) in these situations.
- Completing daily health screenings.
- Wearing a mask.
- Limiting group gatherings and interactions outside of school.
- Washing hands.

- Following general health and hygiene procedures.

Thank you for being such tremendous partners with us during this time. I hope that everyone has a wonderful Winter Break.

Very sincerely and with deep gratitude,

Elizabeth Domangue

Week #	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	January 4 District Open	January 5 District Open	January 6 Staff Work Day	January 7 Staff Work Day	January 8 (First Day of Class)  All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning
2	January 11 All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning  FuelED Start	January 12 All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning	January 13 All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning	January 14 All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning	January 15 All Schools and All Grades Remote Learning
3	January 18 No School—Martin Luther King Jr. Day	January 19 UPES & MSES—Fully In-Person or Hybrid  MSMS & MSHS—Hybrid	January 20 UPES & MSES—Fully In-Person or Hybrid  MSMS & MSHS—Hybrid	January 21 UPES & MSES—Fully In-Person or Hybrid  MSMS & MSHS—Hybrid	January 22 UPES & MSES—Fully In-Person or Hybrid  MSMS & MSHS—Hybrid

# Listen to your children. Listen to your first responders. Listen to your teachers.

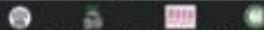


**GABE LEVY**  
MALE STUDENT

WEARING A MASK IS IMPORTANT  
BECAUSE IT LETS YOU  
**PROTECT YOUR  
LOVED ONES**  
AND IT LETS ME BE ABLE TO GO TO  
SCHOOL AND  
**SEE MY FRIENDS**

#MaskUpForManitou  
#ListenToYourTeachers

**LISTEN TO YOUR  
CHILDREN**

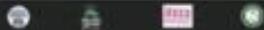


**BRANDON DEMATTO**  
WOOD FOOTBALL & BASKETBALL COACH

AVOIDING LARGE GATHERINGS KEEPS  
OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES ON THE FIELD  
WHERE THEY RECEIVE THE  
**RELATIONSHIPS,  
OPPORTUNITIES, AND  
DEEP LEARNING  
EXPERIENCES**  
THEY NEED.

#MaskUpForManitou  
#ListenToYourTeachers

**LISTEN TO YOUR  
TEACHERS**

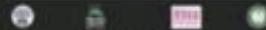


**LEXI HAMMEL**  
STUDENT

WHEN YOU  
**STAY HOME**  
WHEN YOU'RE NOT  
FEELING WELL, OTHER  
KIDS CAN  
**STILL GO TO  
SCHOOL**

#MaskUpForManitou  
#ListenToYourTeachers

**LISTEN TO YOUR  
FIRST RESPONDERS**

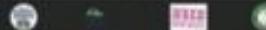


**Carrie Dunlap**  
WOOD ART TEACHER

BY WEARING MASKS YOU HELP  
KEEP  
**CREATIVITY  
CONTAGIOUS**  
IN MY ART ROOM... NOT COVID!

#MaskUpForManitou  
#ListenToYourTeachers

**LISTEN TO YOUR  
TEACHERS**



## Manitou Springs School District