



December 9, 2020

Dear ACSD Families-

I continue to believe that our community and staff have done an incredible job with our hybrid learning since it began in September. Families have supported student learning and conducted daily health screenings, communicating essential information to our school nurses. Our cafeteria, transportation, and buildings and grounds personnel have been meticulous in daily, intermittent, and deep cleaning procedures as they transport and prepare meals and facilities for our students. Our instructional staff has worked tirelessly to address the needs of their students and maintain a balance between rigorous learning and social emotional well-being.

Although our recent District-wide COVID-19 testing yielded a positivity rate of .004% (four-tenths of one percent), our regional infection rate has been increasing; and our instructional program has been impacted. All but a few of the County quarantines that we have been involved with have been due to contact tracing and not as a result of a positive individual in our schools. To date, we have not had one report of a student to student or student to adult transmission of COVID-19. Nonetheless, we have lost more than 300 instructional days due to these necessary precautions. Despite our screening requirements, we have learned that at least three contact tracing cases in the last two weeks were a result of students coming to school with symptoms. Please understand that any one case could quarantine between 3-8 staff members and countless students for up to 14 days. As you can imagine, even a few cases in one building could cause a shift to 100% Remote Learning due to a staffing shortage. I have always believed that there is no substitute for in-person learning; and when our teachers are not present with kids, learning is impacted. Please help us by screening your child and keeping them home when they are symptomatic.

After serious thought and deliberation with our administrative team, I write to inform you that December 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> will be changed to Superintendent Conference Days, as our staff prepares for a continuation of hybrid instruction after the holidays. We believe that this adjustment will allow our teachers and staff to review current data and revise plans, having a very positive impact on student learning as we move into 2021.

On these days, our faculty will continue to examine student performance through the first 16 weeks of school and make the necessary changes to be prepared to begin addressing any gaps in instruction when we return on January 4th. In addition, our secondary staff members will continue to adjust their curriculum with the cancellation of the January 2021 New York State Regents exams.

As our faculty and staff will be fully engaged in this important work, students will not be required to attend any form of learning and do not need to “check in.” The next day of instruction after December 18, 2020, will be on January 4, 2021. The “Blue cohort” will attend in-person while the “Gold cohort” checks in for remote learning, as outlined in the 2020-21 Blue/Gold Day Pattern Calendar, which can be found by typing <https://www.aldenschools.org/Page/13340> in your web browser.

I want to thank you for your continued support, and encourage you to continue communicating with our building principals as needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Stoltman', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Adam Stoltman  
Superintendent of Schools