



February 04, 2022

Dear Helena Public Schools Families and Staff,

In last week's Friday letter, I shared our [Mid-Year Update to the Community](#). If you haven't already, I encourage you to spend a few minutes with the report to learn how we're working to ensure that every student is supported, challenged, and ready to learn.

An important part of that work is measuring student academic performance. Today's sophisticated diagnostic tools allow us to collect and assess academic performance data – and to use that data to support students – in ways that weren't possible for previous generations.

This data-informed approach to teaching is an essential part of our work to close learning gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic. It allows us to tailor teaching strategies to each student's individual learning level, while meeting the needs of classes and grade levels as a whole. It also enhances our ability to provide meaningful feedback to families, empowering parents to be a stronger part of their child's learning team.

Next week you will receive academic assessment reports for your student or students. Watch for an email from Helena Public Schools that will provide a secure link where you can access your child's assessment results.

And please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or principal with any questions. For the district as a whole, we're pleased to see significant progress toward closing pandemic-associated learning gaps in a number of areas.

Of course, the most important thing we can do to prevent pandemic-related learning gaps is to keep our kids in school. Thank you for helping us achieve another full week in the classroom. I couldn't be more grateful for the way our district families and staff have rallied on behalf of our kids.

I am encouraged and excited to see indicators suggesting that Omicron may have peaked in our community. However, our daily new cases remain high and continue to hinder our ability to stay in school. Our hospital is also at capacity. I will remain in close communication with local health officials next week. Should the situation continue to improve, I anticipate lifting the temporary mask mandate on Monday, February 14.

For now, transmission rates remain high and continue to hinder our ability to stay in school. I will continue to be in close communication with local health officials next week as we monitor hospitalizations and our ability to staff our schools. Again, I anticipate our daily case counts will continue to decline this week, as we have seen across our state and country. As the Omicron variant wanes, we will adjust our response protocols, including masking, accordingly.

With the arrival of new testing supplies, the district's drive-through COVID testing clinics will resume Monday. If you or your child become symptomatic, please take advantage of the drive-through testing before returning to school. (See details below on how to schedule an appointment.) Testing of asymptomatic students and family is also available for those who believe they may have been in contact with a positive case.

Finally, I would like to thank the community volunteers who answered the call to serve as substitute teachers, para educators, and volunteers. Each of you are true community heroes, and we are grateful for the dedication and talents you bring to the district – not only now, but as we transition to more normal times.

I wish you a restful weekend.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rex M. Weltz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "W" at the end.

Rex M. Weltz
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools

COVID Drive-Through Testing at Lincoln Center

When:

Monday-Thursday, Feb. 7-10, 4-7 p.m.

Monday-Thursday, Feb. 14-17, 4-7 p.m.

Where:

Lincoln Center (District Central Office), 1325 Poplar St.

Who is eligible?

Testing is available to all school district students, employees, and their immediate household members.

How?

- [Click here to schedule an appointment](#)
- Complete and print a [minor testing consent form](#) and/or [adult testing consent form](#)
- Bring your printed and completed consent form with you to your appointment.
- Pull up to the building, stay in your car, and a staff member will come to you.

If you have symptoms or are asymptomatic, but think you have been exposed, please get tested. Please contact your school nurse with questions.