

Dear CPS Families:

This letter is to provide you with an update on the district's COVID-19 plan and possible next steps for the school district.

Last night, the Board of Education voted to extend the district's current COVID Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. While the Board approved a resolution to extend the current plan and its related mitigation strategies, there is good news on the horizon.

Since the district's meeting with health and medical experts last month, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services adopted the CDC's recommendation for children ages 5-11 to receive the FDA-emergency-authorized Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine via a health order on November 3.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommends that all people 5 years and older get a COVID-19 vaccine as the best way to protect them from the virus. The district's current contact tracing and quarantine protocols also take into consideration vaccination status as a layer of protection for individuals. You can review those [guidelines on pages 23 and 24 of the district's plan](#).

Columbia Public Schools, in partnership with the Columbia/Boone County Health Department, will be offering free optional COVID vaccine clinics for our students beginning later this month. Optional clinics will be offered at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

The district is especially hopeful that with the expansion of vaccine availability, guidance from health and medical professionals at the local, state or federal levels, coupled with decreasing trends of positivity in our community, may allow for the removal of our district's current indoor masking requirement after our elementary students have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated.

Children ages 5-11 are considered fully vaccinated two weeks following the receipt of their second dose of the vaccine.

In addition to information that will be provided by your student's school, families can also access the vaccination clinic schedule, consent forms and vaccine information on the [district's COVID webpage](#).

Receiving the vaccine is voluntary and requires parents to provide consent. Schools do not require that students receive the COVID vaccine. It's also not included as part of the state's law which regulates immunizations in order to attend school in Missouri.

While it has not always been easy, the Board of Education and Columbia Public Schools have made every decision over the course of the pandemic with the safety and well-being of its scholars and employees as its top priority. We look forward to a continued focus on learning and great success for our scholars for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year.

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