Dear University City Schools Parents and Caregivers,

This is a difficult time for our region and our schools. Thank you for your support and courage everyday as you place your children in our care.

First, I have some news. Dr. Grace Lee, principal of Brittany Woods Middle School, will be retiring at the end of the school year. Grace implemented strong programs regarding equity, sustainability and instruction, and I thank her for her continuing service to the District. I will keep you posted about the search to select a new leader for the middle school.

**Striving to stay in-person**

We plan to continue our in-class instruction with intensive prevention measures in place. St. Louis County is experiencing high rates of infections due to the Omicron variant. We keep in daily contact with our medical experts at Washington University School of Medicine. At this point, it is agreed that it is better to have children in school where there are stringent protocols in place.

I do not anticipate a district shutdown, but as you know, the coronavirus sometimes can be an unpredictable health burden. We may have classroom or school building closures. Please continue to adhere to our mitigation measures. We have had a few instances where children were sent to school with symptoms. Please monitor symptoms at home. Doing so helps us to keep everyone safe and minimizes the need to quarantine individuals. We truly appreciate your support.
Next COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic
The Pfizer booster has now been approved for ages 12-16. The Pfizer booster will be available next Tuesday, January 18 at Jackson Park Elementary from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. for ages 12 and up. First and second doses of the Pfizer vaccine will also be available for ages 5 and older. Register ahead at www.ucityschools.org/StLPHVaccine4Children.

New free COVID-19 testing options
Our medical partners from Washington University are currently unable to staff its drive-through saliva testing program. The District has two other options for the University City Schools community to receive free testing.

- Most school nurses are able to administer the free Washington University saliva testing for students. Please call their offices ahead of time to let them know that you would like your child to get a test.

- The District has further contracted with Polk Testing to offer free, drive-up nasal swab testing in front of University City High School every Thursday from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. starting this Thursday, January 13 through February 3. This is for members of the District community only. Participants must register online by 8 a.m. on the morning of the clinic. For more information, click here. To register, go to https://orders.bridgediagnostics.com/polktesting.

Quarantine/Isolation
Researchers believe our region will peak in transmissions and that cases will rapidly decrease very soon. Right now, we will remain with a 10-day quarantine for staff and students identified with positive cases or as close contacts. With the recommendation of our medical partners, we plan to pivot to a 5-day isolation/quarantine protocol on January 18, the first day of school after the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

COVID-19 communication
To avoid confusion and spare your inboxes from numerous emails, I will no longer be sending an all-parent email notifying you of a new active case in your child’s school. You can always check on the number of active cases and quarantines in a school by going to our Covid Dashboard. We will go from updating the dashboard from twice to three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I acknowledge that we had some issues with the dashboard this week. We have determined a solution and accurate, transparent information will be captured.

If your child has been found to be either a close contact or in a classroom with an active case, you will be notified by your principal via email with further information and instructions.

In cases when it is determined your child must quarantine, you will also receive a phone call from the school principal or the school nurse.

We will continue with our early morning reminders to screen for symptoms that also contain a link to the Covid Dashboard.

Text alerts
Our contact tracing team remains vigilant. They need your partnership to do their job well, so, please, check your emails and your voicemails daily for important information that may concern your child.
Sending text alerts to you about important emails or robocalls is a very effective way to keep you in the loop. We’d like to make sure you get texts in certain situations. Please opt-in to receive text messaging by doing the following:

- Make sure your cell phone number(s) are accurate in the Parent Portal for both parent 1 and parent 2. Update them if necessary.
- On your cell phone(s), text to the number 67587 and write YES in the message section.

**Transition Week**
The last week of January is typically our Transition Week when we host in-school events for parents of rising kindergarten, 6th and 9th graders. We have decided to postpone these events, and will notify you about the new dates once they have been finalized.

**Key Dates**
**Friday, Jan. 14, Early Release Day**
**Monday, Jan. 17, District closed**, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, end of first semester
**Thursday, Jan. 20, Board of Education Regular Meeting** via Zoom (registration link)
**Saturday, Jan. 29, UCHS PTO hosts Equations Competition** (team registration deadline Jan. 22, 2022)

Things are difficult, but everyday I am reminded of the kindness and support of our district community. Sometimes the little things make a big difference in challenging times. I saw this firsthand last week when three of our Jackson Park parents surprised the staff with a special "Love Bomb" that included a breakfast treat, coffee and hot chocolate in the staff lounge. This kindness and support truly is the heart of our district community.

In Service of Our Children,

Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR
Superintendent