



Friday, January 22, 2021

Good Evening Royals!

I am happy to report that we have made it through our first week of in-person instruction with flexible cohorts for our K-3 students and students in special education low incidence programs K-12. Thank you for your continued patience in working with us as we do our best to return our students to our schools. Over the last few days, I have received some very supportive emails and words of encouragement, and I want to say that this has been and will continue to be a total team effort. Our teachers, our administration, our Board of School Directors, our entire staff, and you, our parents and families, are all working together to return our students to our schools. I have also received emails and held phone conversations with parents who want me to open our schools back up for more students and students in our secondary schools. I have heard the upset and the very real pain caused by this pandemic. As we continue to demonstrate progress in our ability to properly staff our schools and maintain staffing levels, we will work toward our ultimate goal of returning all students for some level of in-person instruction. We will continue to reassess this possibility every two (2) weeks. At this time, however, I wanted to provide you with an update on what I know regarding the vaccine and vaccination process.

First, I am disheartened and frustrated that surrounding counties and some more affluent communities seem to be in line to vaccinate their teachers before we are in our County. I have joined my other colleagues to express our collective frustration and concern that Delaware County, as densely populated as it is, has not been considered a

top priority for the vaccination process. More importantly, public educators should be considered a high priority and be among the first to receive the first of two doses of the vaccine. I recognize the vaccination is voluntary, but I believe it is a fairly significant factor in our ability to bring our students back into our schools while still adhering to some of the mitigating factors (masks, social distancing, and hygiene) that may linger for some time even after we are all vaccinated.

Recently, Delaware County Superintendents met and continued to advocate **with one voice** for the school districts in this County. We were pleased to find out that our collective efforts were heard. The Delaware County Superintendents, the Chester County Health Department (CCHD), and the Delaware County Covid Task Force developed a vaccination plan for educational faculty and staff throughout the County. Upper Darby School District, Garnet Valley School District, Radnor School District, and Ridley School District would act as school-based vaccination locations. These locations and plans would provide first and second doses of the vaccine to the teachers and staff who work in our schools in Delaware County. All four (4) locations would operate the same way and would require appointments and employment verification. All four (4) locations would be accessible to staff throughout the County based on appointment availability. The plan calls for staffing supported by each district, but the overall operation of each location would be led by the County in collaboration with the Chester County Health Department. As Delaware County Superintendents, we were thrilled to hear this could really begin to happen on February 13th.

Just this week, however, we have been informed that the February 13th plan may not become a reality unless the County receives 25,000-30,000 vaccinations by February 3rd. As Superintendents, we questioned how it could even be possible that Delaware County, an area that has been in the "Substantial" range for some time now, receives the same number of doses of the vaccine as other less densely populated counties. If we continue down this same path and the plans we have advocated for do not happen soon, we are looking at a much longer period of time before we are vaccinated.

I am asking for your advocacy. I have witnessed the power of the community during this pandemic, and several more months of not being able to properly staff our schools and return students to school for in-person instruction will only add more emotional stress and academic uncertainty for our students. As each month passes by with current social distancing guidelines in place, implementation of guidance on instructional models based on positivity rates, and other mitigating factors, I do not see students returning to school for more in-person instruction this school year. The vaccine is a vital component to our students returning to our schools.

Delaware County Superintendents will continue to do our best to advocate for more vaccines in our County, but we need your voices to be heard. Please contact Joanne Roth of the Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Preparedness & Response at [joroth@pa.gov](mailto:joroth@pa.gov), and Cindy Findley MSW Pennsylvania Department of Health | Bureau of Communicable Diseases Director | Division of Immunizations at [cfindley@pa.gov](mailto:cfindley@pa.gov) to ask that Delaware County receive the requisite doses to implement our plan.

Thank you for what you do for the students in our community!

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