

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OKALOOSA COUNTY

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
MARCUS D. CHAMBERS

ATTORNEY TO THE BOARD
C. JEFFREY McINNIS, Esq.



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January 3, 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Happy New Year to you and your family! I hope you had a wonderful break and that 2022 brings you much joy and success in all that you do. As you know, students will return to school on Wednesday, January 5th, and I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you our thoughts on how we will begin the second semester in Okaloosa County Schools.

From the beginning, our goal has been to keep school operations as normal as possible with certain health and safety protocols in place. As we did this fall, we are committed to keeping face-to-face learning as the priority because we know that students overwhelmingly do better in that environment. We will continue to implement health and safety measures such as daily cleaning and spray-disinfecting our schools and buses, providing opportunities for proper handwashing throughout the day, continuing to be mindful of large group gatherings during the school day, and creating social distancing where possible. We have been tracking COVID-19 information from the Department of Health through December and continue to see low numbers of positive cases among our students and staff at this time, though some increase is predicted. We remain committed to posting numbers of positive COVID-19 cases on our website daily. Our current COVID-19 protocols are also available at www.okaloosaschools.com and remain the same as they were at the end of the first semester.

With student and staff health and safety in mind, please do not send your child to school if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 such as sore throat, runny nose, fever, loss of taste or smell, or fatigue. Symptomatic students should remain at home until they receive a negative test result for COVID-19 and are symptom-free for 24 hours. We will keep you informed of any guidance from the Florida Department of Education and Florida Department of Health on our website. Okaloosa County schools are currently adhering to the latest guidelines provided by these entities. In particular, it is important to remember from this fall that if your child is identified through contact tracing as a close contact to a positive COVID-19 case, you may allow your child to continue to attend school as long as they don't have any symptoms. This was a very important adjustment made at the state level which allowed students who were well to continue to come to school.

For those who need testing, the District has established a testing site for students and staff at Central Baptist Church in Crestview on weekdays from 7:45 – 1:15. We are working with the Department of Health to reopen a second testing site in Niceville and will post information on our website as it becomes available. Your school may also have a number of take-home tests that can be used for students and staff. For other non-district test sites, please visit the DOH-Okaloosa website at www.floridahealthcovid19.gov.

Please contact your child's school for any assistance that you may need. If the question is medical in nature, contact your child's physician or the Okaloosa Department of Health.

I look forward to safely and successfully moving through these winter months and providing your child with the quality, face-to-face, education that they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcus D. Chambers".

Marcus D. Chambers

ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX-120 LOWERY PLACE S.E.-FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA 32548
TELEPHONE (850) 833-3100 FAX (850) 833-4237

CARVER HILL ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX-461 W. SCHOOL AVENUE-CRESTVIEW, FLORIDA 32536
TELEPHONE (850) 689-7117 FAX (850) 689-7121