

# Lois P. Rockwell Elementary School

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December 20, 2021



## Rockwell Register

Special Edition

**Notice: Due to health and safety measures, the DHS Marching Band holiday concert at Rockwell and all other cluster schools has been cancelled and will be rescheduled in the spring.**

Dear Parents,

We would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you and your extended families a terrific winter break and holiday season. Your children have been an absolute joy to work with these first four months of our school year. They have provided what most of us in education missed so much when we were not 100% in person here in the building over the past two years. It is the day to day interaction and engagement with children while they are learning new things and developing skills and talents that make all of us love what we do and want to continue even when we are faced with challenging circumstances. Though we have had classes and individuals in quarantine periodically since September, the majority of our students and staff members have been present making teaching and learning more typical and more effective for our students. We will continue to follow all guidelines to keep all of us safe and healthy and ready to continue our work with academics as well as the social and emotional learning and support that adds to each child's development.

We know that things change rapidly with regard to the health and safety CoVID measures to which our school and our district is required to implement. We will communicate with you when things change and when situations arise at Rockwell ES that require direct contact with you. Below is information related to the press briefing that Dr. Monifa McKnight, Interim Superintendent MCPS, provided earlier today about our continued commitment to students and teaching and learning as we persevere with in-person education during the ongoing pandemic.

As you know, our district will implement a system-wide closure of all buildings from December 23-January 2. Rockwell's office will be closed during this time and staff will generally not be available until we reopen on January 3, 2022. However, any CoVID related emails about your children and family can be communicated via email to both Mr. Rodney Isabell and me during the break so that we can provide guidance on returning to school on January 3, 2022.

Again, we wish all of you a great break and wonderful time with your children!

Sincerely,  
*Cheryl Clark*  
Principal



# MCPS Commits to Keep Schools Open

December 20, 2021

*COVID-19 Testing, Face Coverings, Stressing Vaccinations and a Request to the Community to Follow Mitigation Strategies is Focus of MCPS Approach to Recent Positive Case Rise*

In line with national and statewide trends, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is experiencing a substantial increase in COVID-19 cases. The district has seen more student and staff cases in December than in the first three months of the school year combined. Nonetheless, positive case rates in MCPS are still one of the lowest in the state of Maryland. **As MCPS confronts this concerning pattern, the district remains committed to keeping schools open for fully in-person learning.**

Maintaining in-person instruction provides students with the best environment for addressing the learning disruptions that resulted from virtual and hybrid learning in the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years.

During a December 20 press conference, Dr. Monifa B. McKnight, Interim Superintendent of Schools, reaffirmed the commitment to keeping schools open. Dr. McKnight was joined by Dr. James Bridgers, acting county health officer for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). MCPS has partnered with DHHS through the pandemic, and their recommendations have guided MCPS for the past 21 months.

“This past summer, our staff worked incredibly hard to be able to welcome students back to school five days a week for in-person instruction because we know that in-person learning is what is best for students,” said Dr. McKnight. “I am very grateful for the hard work of all staff, our partnership with our employee associations and our entire community to make this happen. We must do what is right for each and every one of our students and that is to teach, in-person.”

**The following parameter will force the consideration of individual school closures.**

To ensure the safety of students and staff, MCPS will be following DHHS guidance around individual school outbreaks as defined by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Beginning in January, if 5 percent or more of unrelated students/teachers/staff (minimum of 10 unrelated students/teachers/staff) test positive in

a 14-day period, then DHHS and MCPS will work together to determine if the school should be closed for 14 days and the students would transition to virtual learning.

Upholding the commitment to in-person instruction requires the entire Montgomery County community to remain vigilant to all health and safety measures available. Those strategies are:

- **Get the shot.** The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and available for everyone ages 5 and older.
- **Get the booster shot.** The third shot to ensure you are sufficiently protected is now available for everyone 16 and above.
- **Wear a face covering** over your nose and mouth whenever you are in an MCPS building or in public buildings.
- **Wash your hands** frequently before and after eating or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Say Yes to the Test.** [Give permission](#) for the random and rapid COVID-19 screening programs in MCPS schools. This is critical to identifying cases and reducing the number of students in quarantine.
- **Socialize outdoors.** If you meet with others indoors, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces. [See more recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)
- **Planning to travel?** Know what the CDC [has to say about how to do that safely.](#)

Although as a community we may be experiencing pandemic fatigue, it is crucial that we continue practicing the preventive behaviors that have helped to keep our community safe.

### Important Resources

- **Need the shot?** Visit the Montgomery County Health and Human Services website to find a clinic and to register for a free vaccine. <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/>
- **Say Yes to the Test** COVID-19 Testing Information, Forms and Flyers:  
<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/coronavirus/random-testing.aspx>  
English PSA <https://youtu.be/5bWVDTZNL4A>  
Spanish PSA <https://youtu.be/UtJ8ikU4hcU>  
Say Yes to The Test Flyers: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Korean](#), [Portuguese](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Amharic](#)

- **Do you have symptoms? Did you travel? Did you gather with others?** Get a free test.

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing.html>

- **Latest news and information** about COVID-19 in Montgomery County

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/news/index.html>