



January 20, 2022

Dear EPS Families,

I wanted to send a letter to update our school community on a number of topics such as the workload on our teachers, volunteers in the classroom and masks. I just want you to know what we have been doing and answer some questions such as what processes are in place for increasing subs and allowing volunteers into a classroom with your child.

Teacher bonuses

As you are likely aware, we are experiencing an extremely high number of unfilled substitute positions at this time. When this happens, teachers have to cover classes during their plan or take on additional students. We have been pulling from every resource available such as counselors, classroom assistants and site/district administrators to cover classes in a meaningful way. This has been an exhausting burden on our staff. It is our teachers who are carrying the heaviest load to keep our schools open. Because of this, for the months of January and February, we have created a bonus plan for increased compensation every time an employee loses their plan or takes on extra students. This does not in any way change how exhausted teachers are. It is meant to demonstrate that we recognize the extra work they are doing. If you see a teacher, please thank them.

Substitute Recruitment and Incentives

The district has been working on the substitute crisis for some time. Detailed below are just some of the steps we have taken to increase the number of substitutes and to provide support for our teachers so in-person learning can continue.

- Increased the daily substitute rate of pay by \$10 a day this year.
- Increased the pay on Friday by an additional \$20 because this is our highest unfilled sub day and the largest day for absences.
- Instituted a \$125 incentive for substituting 15 days in a single month.

- Accepted a donation from a local business to incentivize substitutes. Every substitute working a full day will be entered into a daily drawing for a monetary bonus.

State Employees or any Volunteers Covering Classes

To substitute in a classroom at Edmond Schools there are two requirements. The first is a completed background check and then an hour and a half required training. To volunteer as a substitute teacher, the OSBI fingerprint background check is still required. We have worked to shorten the training to speed up the process for volunteers; however, we want volunteers to be properly trained and prepared to be successful in the classroom. Additionally, we do not have any control over how long the background check will take. If you want to substitute or volunteer, you can [CLICK HERE](#) to apply, or [CLICK HERE](#) for additional information on substitute teacher information and requirements.

Masks and Remote Learning

Some have asked why we have not reinstated our mask mandate during the surge. Simply put, we are required to offer an opt-out for personal choice. When we had a mask mandate, so many made the decision to opt out that only a few students in each class were wearing masks. Masking is most effective when it is universal, and that has not been the case in our classrooms.

The District has tried to remain very flexible in its approach to the virus and its variants. We all know that in-person learning is best for students, so when it's necessary to pivot to remote learning, we try to do so at the smallest level first. We pivot a grade first then a school next if necessary. This approach keeps more students in school for longer periods of time.

As with most communication, I realize there will be varying opinions on the decisions the district is making. I thank you for your continued grace and support.

Sincerely

Angela Grunewald
Superintendent