



Jacksonville | North Pulaski SCHOOL DISTRICT

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www.jnpsd.org

Building Futures: Every Scholar, Every Day

January 5, 2021

3:22 pm

JNPSD School Community:

Please continue to stay informed through all of our postings on JNP social media, JNP website, local media, and other communication outlets. All community updates, official documents, and other information posted since March 6, 2020 are available for your reference.

Governor's Press Conference (APSRC Report)

The Governor opened this week's briefing with an overview of Arkansas' phased rollout of vaccinations over the coming days, weeks, and months.

Phase 1-A is currently underway with the vaccine being provided to:

- High priority health care workers
- Long-term care facility staff & residents
- Other high priority groups:
 - Primary care
 - Urgent care
 - College/university student health center
 - K-12 health clinics and school nurses
 - Dental clinics
 - EMS, fire and law enforcement who serve as first responders
 - Pharmacies
 - Home health
 - Private care/personal care
 - Hospice care
 - Dialysis centers
 - Corrections officers
 - Blood donation centers

The Governor said approximately 180,000 Arkansans fall within the Phase 1-A category, and the goal is to complete vaccinating these individuals by the end of January.

Vaccination for the estimated 400,000 Arkansans (not including essential workers) that are included in Phase 1-B is estimated to begin in February. This group is to include:

- People who are 70 and older
- Frontline essential workers:
 - Teachers and school staff
 - Food and agricultural workers
 - Firefighters/police not in 1-A
 - Manufacturing workers
 - Grocery store workers
 - Public transit workers
 - Child care workers
 - U.S. Postal Service workers
 - Essential government workers

Phase 1-C is estimated to begin in April 2021 and currently includes the following groups:

- People who are 65-69
- People who are 16-64 with high-risk medical conditions
- Essential workers:
 - Transportation and logistics
 - Water and wastewater
 - Food service
 - Shelter and housing
 - Public safety
 - Finance
 - IT and communications
 - Energy
 - Media
 - Public health workers

The Governor stressed there could be adjustments to Phases 1-B and 1-C, and both phases will continue using pharmacies, hospitals, and local health units to dispense the vaccine. ADH, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, and the Arkansas National Guard will help coordinate the logistics. The state's vaccine plan will be made available online by January 15.

When providing an update on education, Arkansas Department of Education Secretary Johnny Key said the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has received a number of questions regarding COVID-19 Leave for school staff.

“As you may remember in the first semester, the CARES Act Steering Committee approved \$15 million to set up a system of up to two weeks of paid emergency leave for school employees if they were tested positive for COVID-19, had to quarantine, or were caring for a dependent who was subject to quarantine. Those funds have been depleted at this point. However, we would encourage districts to consider continuing that policy of providing flexible leave options across the state. It has been an important part of our success across the state so that teachers know that they have that option available and do not have to use their own personal leave that can be used for other types of illnesses,” Secretary Key said.

"Arkansas is subject to receive over \$500 million from the latest federal stimulus act that will be going directly to schools. This is more than four times greater than the ESSER funds they received in the first semester and we would encourage districts to take a look at their policies and create flexible leave options for their employees, and they can use local funds or they can use these new federal funds to do that. We will be issuing information through a Commissioner’s Memo to superintendents later this week so they will have all the details on how to do that. We are also working with the Arkansas School Board Association with respect to model policies that districts can consider,” Secretary Key said.

Secretary Key was asked if students will be required to undergo standardized testing this year, including those students who are participating virtually full-time.

“We do intend to have testing for students. It is still required by the federal government. I just read recently both the Senate and the House Chairs of the Education Committees in Congress are insisting on states administering these tests. Now, the question of how they are administered or where they are administered, we expect that they will be administered onsite. So we are working with districts in their efforts to work with their parents if their students are working remotely now to have situations where they can come onsite in the spring for the administration of these tests. The requirement for 95 percent testing is still in place. This is part of our contract with the federal government, which almost \$800 million of funding to the state hinges on meeting the terms of what in essence is a contract with the federal government. So yes, we do plan to administer these tests onsite,” Secretary Key responded.

Governor Hutchinson added, “As a policymaker, to me, it’s important to know what the impact of the pandemic has been on education and on their progress. You only really know that by testing and you’ll learn as to what’s been the impact of online for some students, perhaps positive, for other students, negative. We might learn a little bit as to how to respond to this better in the future. So testing to me is very important for us to know what steps to take in the future.”

1. High school and middle school scholars and parents: Virtual Mondays will continue through the end of January. We will evaluate this month in order to make decisions on continuing this practice. You will be advised.
2. Student registration is open. We are using an online registration system. Parents can access the system at www.jnpsd.org. Please contact your child's school if you have any questions.
3. Meals are being delivered to virtual school scholars. Please contact your child's school if you need meals delivered. Bus routes operate on Mondays and Wednesdays with enough meals for the week.
4. Virtual or digital education options may look different next school year. More information will be shared as state officials make final decisions on the structure and requirements for virtual school programs.

We appreciate your support of JNPSD!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Duffie', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Bryan Duffie. Ed.D.
Superintendent