



Tuesday, December 14th, 2021

Dear parents, families and staff,

As I am sure you have heard, the Omicron variant is increasing our case positivity and hospitalization rates in Illinois. In the first weeks of December, we have seen a 40% increase in case positivity. Those individuals that are most at risk are our unvaccinated population which includes all our children under the age of 5 and some of our adult and youth population. We know that Omicron is spreading rapidly with children and young adults. We encourage everyone that has not gotten vaccinated to do so as soon as possible.

There have unfortunately been drastic increases in case positivity within Evanston as well as with our partner Early Childhood facilities and within school districts 65 and 202.

Due to these increased numbers and cases and the concerns for our children that are unvaccinated, **IWSE has decided to close our facilities for break starting this Monday the 20th**. We are doing this and notifying you now to give as much notice as possible. We also strongly believe that by closing early we hope to avoid a potential outbreak and any of our children becoming ill with the Omicron COVID-19 variant as has happened to others in our community. We believe a preventative mindset is better and safer than a reactive one.

For the same reasons, as many of our fellow early childhood providers, **we have decided to stay closed thru Monday the 17th of January**. This provides the time after the New Year's holiday for people to ensure they have not been infected and have the entire family get tested prior to return to school and not bring the virus into our centers. Our teachers and staff will be preparing the week of the 20th and working remotely with your families in these first two weeks of January from the 4th thru the 14th.

Please enjoy your family and friends during this time as best as possible, but it is recommended to stay away from large groups of people over the holiday break. **Following the same precautions as we have been of social distancing, washing hands frequently and wearing masks in public is still the best protection against many of these COVID-19 variants, including Omicron.** Again, please consider getting vaccinated

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Teen Baby Nursery
Family Support Program

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Helping Children and Families Thrive Since 1913





The Infant Welfare
Society of Evanston, Inc.

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or taking your booster over the break if you have not yet done so. **We will require the entire household to have a negative COVID test no sooner than 72 hours before returning to school.**

Our IWSE teachers and staff members are now 100% vaccinated and we will continue to test weekly to ensure that we are being as safe as possible. These precautions are needed to ensure all of our safety and make sure we all are protecting one another from this virus. Omicron has shown an increased virulence and impact to vaccinated people as well.

IWSE staff and leadership don't take this decision lightly and understand the challenges of childcare when you are required to be at work. Ultimately, it is the safety of your children and their health and indeed their very lives that we are most focused on. We hope that we have your support in this proactive decision.

We have all been exhausted and frustrated with this pandemic. We understand how you are feeling as we are feeling the same.

Please try to find some peace and relaxation over these next days as best as possible. Know that our organizational decisions are made with your children's safety, health and wellness above all else.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any concerns or questions at 773-401-2704.

Have a restful and safe holiday and New Year! **We hope to see everyone back to school on the 18th of January with a negative test.**

Sincerely,

Stephen Vick
Executive Director

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