

Superintendent's Updates

January 5, 2021

Return to Learn Update



ISD 709

Guiding Principles

FOR RE-OPENING SCHOOLS

- 1 Ensure the safety and wellness of students and staff
- 2 Deliver high-quality instruction to students, regardless of delivery model
- 3 Equity: Ensuring all means all
- 4 Optimize use of resources (space & materials)
- 5 Community and stakeholder engagement in plan development

Equity Criteria:

Access

Participation

Representation

Outcomes

ISD709.org/Equity

2020 Return to Learn

Current Local COVID-19 Numbers

St. Louis County Bi-Weekly Case Rate for Schools

- 9/12 - 16.14
- 9/19 - 22.47
- 9/26 - 33.37
- 10/03 - 35.2
- 10/10 - 32.7
- 10/17 - 34.2
- 10/24 - 39.8
- 10/31 - 54.3
- 11/07 - 105
- 11/14 - 153.9
- 11/21 - 169.7
- 11/28 - 154.1
- 12/05 - 127.4
- 12/12 - 100.2
- 12/19 - 72.6

Policy Option	Range (14-day case rate per 10,000 people)
In-person learning for all students	0 to less than 10
Elementary in-person, Middle/high school hybrid	10 to less than 20
Both hybrid	20 to less than 30
Elementary hybrid, Middle/high school distance	30 to less than 50
Both distance	50 or more

Governor's New Guidance

The new state guidance is designed to prioritize in-person learning for the state's youngest students. Per the Governor's announcement:

- Schools play a critical role in the health, well-being, and education of Minnesota's children.
- Youngest kids are less susceptible to serious complications from COVID-19.
- We have learned how to reduce spread in schools from success in other settings.

[Recent research shared by the CDC](#) indicates that children who tested positive for COVID 19 were more likely to have attended gatherings such as weddings, parties and playdates and not as likely to have attended child care or school in-person.

2020 Return to Learn

According to the [new state guidelines](#), returning to full in-person learning at elementary requires a rolling start, with no more than 3 grade level bands added during a two-week period.

[Minnesota's Safe Learning Plan](#) requires 2 to 5 days for preparation and transition to a less restrictive model change. We would use three days, beginning after the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday Monday January 18. Friday January 22 is semester break.

As per the state's Safe Learning Plan, our middle school and high school students must continue with distance learning, with exploration and planning for returning to in-person learning as conditions and guidance allow.

Consultation with MDE and MDH

- Met with formal team yesterday to receive feedback on current elementary in-person planning and considerations for secondary
- The MDE/MDH team was fully supportive our in-person elementary return plan aligned well with the governor's guidance
- Current guidance for secondary remains based on COVID rates,

2020 Return to Learn

We are currently in distance learning at elementary and secondary levels. We are preparing for:

In-person classes for PK-2 on January 25 and grades 3-5 on February 8. (Families may choose to remain in distance learning.)

Additional synchronous learning at the secondary level beginning on January 25 and continued planning for return to in-person as soon as current rates or state guidance allows, as well as resumption of in-person targeted supports

Planning Period

- Elementary planning and preparation for a safe and productive return
- January 19th-21st
- In-person and Distance will be paused due to scheduling and planning

Continued Stakeholder Communication and Collaboration

- Meeting with District Advisory Committee tomorrow
- Problem solving meetings with administration and teachers
- Staff and family updates
- Virtual staff meetings

Model Selection Update

As of 3:45pm today:

- Total elementary student enrollment - 3371
- Total responses 2992, 88.8% return rate
- In-person - 2579, 86.2%
- Distance Learning - 413, 13.8%
- Of the total 2992 responses, 2454 (82%) were previously in hybrid, 538 (18%) previously in DL

Saliva Testing

- Initial order of 1400 saliva tests have been placed
- Initial testing sites will be the 9 public elementary schools
- Hours are still being determined and will vary based on site
- Licensed School Nurses and Health Assistants will act as site coordinators
- 1st required testing date for the district is 1/27/20

Saliva Testing

Testing is optional for staff but the district is required to offer testing to all staff working in-person in the school buildings during in-person and hybrid learning. This includes: bus drivers, child care and early learning program staff (including ECFE, ECSE, PreK, school readiness, and school-age care), child care or school-age care program staff who operate within the school building (whether operated by the district or run independently), community education staff, educators, nutrition staff, paraprofessionals, school and district administration/office staff, school nurses, service coop staff, and support staff such as social workers and guidance counselors.

Monitoring/Implement State and Guidance

- Tier 1B vaccinations announcement
- Additional interpretation of Safe Learning guidance
- Potential changes for secondary

Next Steps:

- Continue planning for safe and successful return to in-person instruction
- Finalize process to determine who wishes to remain in distance learning and adjust staffing accordingly
- Continue to monitor and implement quickly changing state and local guidance
- Continue communication and collaboration with all stakeholders

Strategic Planning Update

Overview

Given the current focus on COVID-19 model change and the limited time since my previous update, I have a few minor updates to report.

- Brief meeting with TeamWorks
- Additional conversation with District Continuous Improvement Team
- Seeking additional board input