

Red Wing Public Schools
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Red Wing
Public Schools
ISD # 256



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School Board Meeting Agenda Item

Topic: COVID-Related Topics (Updated)
Contact(s):
Presenter(s): Karsten Anderson, Superintendent

Nature of Action Requested

Board Action
Board Information or Report

Background Information

COVID Data

Joni Gorman and Lisa Steggerda update COVID data on a weekly basis after Goodhue County shares its data. Generally, this occurs on Mondays so the report will often be updated shortly before board meetings. The latest version is posted for your review.

Maggie Cichosz explained that “projected” data rates are based on actual data, not estimates based on trends. Cases move on or off county reports and sometimes there are reporting delays, so the word “projected” is used. Numbers on the county reports do not match the CDC website exactly due to reporting delays and the rolling nature of CDC’s data reporting. The Minnesota Department of Health no longer reports two-week case rates, but they do provide data of cases by county.

The COVID Data report now reflects adjustments to include the latest numbers. Even the latest figures may change as data is entered into county, state and federal tracking programs.

Vaccination and Testing Plan

Policy 809 was approved on January 10th to comply with a Federal mandate requiring vaccinations or weekly testing. The pertinent portion of the mandate was recently struck down. The Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA) indicated districts do not need to revoke the policy because it states “the school district’s intent is that this policy meet, and should be read consistent with procedures...to the extent these regulations are adopted and enforceable...if any part of this policy is construed to be in violation of any law, it shall not be enforced, but portions remaining valid shall remain in full force and effect.” However, the recommendation is to revoke the policy to be clear to employees that vaccinations/weekly testing are not mandatory.

Recommendation: I move to revoke Policy 809.

Learning Plan for 2021-22

The COVID Response Team and Superintendent would like to change the current Learning Plan. The proposed plan, which is attached, includes significant changes to staff isolation periods as well as student and staff quarantining requirements. The recommendation is to adopt changes effective with the first day of second semester. Due to county case numbers and feedback, a revised recommendation is made.

Revised Recommendation: I move to approve the updated Learning Plan as presented with the following addition for Quarantining for E-6:

Students in close contact with an infected person at school do not need to quarantine but should continue to monitor for symptoms. Students will be quarantined if there is a positive household member.

COVID Face Coverings

The latest version of Policy 808: Face Coverings is included as an attachment. There are no recommended changes at this time.

Distance Learning Proposal for RWHS on Fridays

Principals and the Superintendent propose implementing Distance Learning at the high school on Fridays from January 21st through at least February 25th. The recommendation is made to balance the need for in-person learning with the need to address substitute shortages.

At the elementary level, in-person learning is desired because many students learn more in-person. Further, requiring all students to learn remotely has a huge negative impact on many families and businesses. High schools administrators advocate for in-person learning as much as possible, especially because students are adjusting to in-person learning after a challenging start to the year. They want to reinforce the positive momentum seen with student discipline data.

However, there are significant substitute shortages throughout the district; this results in teachers covering for other teachers during their prep time. Unfilled absences are highest on Fridays.

The recommendation is to require Distance Learning at the high school on Fridays through at least February 25th. If approved, elementary students would continue to learn in school 5 days per week, and high school students would still be in school 4 days per week. On Fridays, all substitutes would be assigned to the elementary schools, so there would be some relief for all teachers. The goal is to implement the plan immediately; high school teachers were asked to conduct final exams prior to Friday, January

Recommendation: I move to implement Distance Learning at RWHS on Fridays from January 21st – February 25th.

Potential Mitigation Strategies

There was a request to consider additional mitigation strategies to minimize risk of moving to Distance Learning. These are some of the potential mitigation strategies that were brainstormed but not necessarily recommended by anyone.

Community Mitigation Strategies	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Stress importance of mitigation strategies to parents and community members	Addresses significant sources of spread.	Numerous messages already in community.	Administration will implement.	One message sent, more as appropriate will be issued.
Quarantining	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Eliminate shortened quarantining for students in E-6	Keeps potentially infectious people out of the building.	Students miss more school.	Not planned at this time.	
Implement quarantining for students in 7-12	Keeps potentially infectious people out of the building.	Students miss more school.	Not planned at this time.	
Universal Face Coverings	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Enforce policy more strictly for employees.	Further reduce spread. Sets example.		Building leaders will review current practice and develop plans as appropriate.	Implementation of plans planned for January.
Enforce policy more strictly for students.	Further reduce spread.	Impossible to fully implement Consequences may result in students missing more school.	Building leaders will review current practice and develop plans as appropriate.	Implementation of plans planned for January.
Announce expectations at every event.	Further reduce spread.	Must follow through. How is it enforced? Must provide masks	The Activities Director will issue expectations	

Contact other teams to announce face coverings expectations	Higher compliance		Activities Director will contact counterpart in other districts.	
No removal of masks for group photos.	Further reduce spread. Sets example.		Under consideration.	
Attendance Monitoring and Contact Tracing	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Provide more resources to make attendance calls and complete contact tracing	Reduces spread.	Availability of staff.	The Supt. plans to implement temporary positions at \$25/hour.	3 phone screeners hired
Testing	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Implement weekly screening for all	Reduces spread.	Prohibitively expensive (about \$240,000 per week plus staff time). Difficult to implement.	Not planned for everyone.	The board approved a policy consistent with a Federal mandate to require vaccinations or weekly testing for employees.
Vaccinations	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Offer more clinics			The Supt. plans to offer more clinics as appropriate.	
Encourage students and community members to vaccinate.			The Communications Manager will provide messaging as needed.	
Physical Distancing	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Check spaces between desks	Cost effective. Simple.	Must be enforced and monitored.	Building leaders and/or custodians will remind teachers and periodically monitor.	

No large indoor events without 3-foot physical distancing.			Under consideration.	
Meals	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Ensure elementary students are spread out during lunch in their classrooms.	Simple. No cost.		Building leaders will remind teachers and periodically monitor.	
Reduce number of students in RWHS cafeteria at a given time.		Costs and time for some solutions.	Some progress made by adding tables out of the cafeteria and allowing students to be in locker bay.	Kevin is working on a plan to remove up to one-half of lockers so tables can be spread out. Frank is considering a plan to split 7 th /8 th graders into two lunches.
Assign seating at RWHS.	Helps with contact tracing.	Difficult to enforce.	Not planned.	
Require masks immediately after eating.	Reduces spread.	Difficult to enforce.	Not planned.	
Rotate by week having some kids eat in classrooms.	Increases physical distancing.	Impact on custodians. Difficult to implement.	Not planned.	
Add an additional lunch period for second semester.	Increases physical distancing.	Difficult to implement with current schedule.	Not planned.	
Increase physical distancing while in line.		Long lines with little space.	Planned if possible.	
Activities	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
Require weekly testing of student-athletes	Reduces spread.		Not planned.	

Limit number of spectators at athletic events.	Reduces spread.	Other Big 9 schools are not doing this. Impact on visitors from other schools.	Not planned.	
Other	Pros	Cons	Plan	Status
COVID pay of 10 days for employees	Encourages staff to stay home when sick.	Difficult to monitor. More subs needed.	Not planned but MOU for use of sick leave banks could be considered.	The Supt. is working with Education Minnesota on an MOU for use of their sick leave bank.
Bring specialists to regular elementary classrooms.	Fewer interactions while passing each other.	Access to materials. Elementary teachers lose space for prep. Minimal impact.	Not planned.	
Implement one-way hallways at RWHS	Reduces spread.	Minimal impact.	Not planned.	
Reopen Jefferson to space out elementary students and lower class sizes.	Increases physical distancing.	Expensive. Difficult to hire additional teachers. Significant time to implement.	Not planned.	
Implement 4-day week	Reduces interactions	Significant impact on younger children, families and local businesses. The district would not meet minimum state requirements.	Not planned.	
Two-week pause in school after Winter Break	Ceiling to floor sanitation. Reduces spread after family gatherings.	Impact on younger children, families and local businesses. Reduces in-person learning. Impact on sports and activities.	Not planned.	

Further restrict access to RWPS during the school day.	Further reduce spread from the community into the schools.	No recruiting visits. No visiting scholars and speakers. Disconnect from community.	Not planned.	
Eliminate all field trips.			Not planned but strong mitigation strategies must be in place.	

Community Mitigation Strategies

The COVID Response Team suggested providing communications to community members urging the public's help in keeping kids in school. For students to remain in school, we need everyone to implement mitigation strategies in the workplace, in their homes, and throughout their communities. In particular:

- Wear masks
- Social distance at least 3 feet from non-household members
- Wash your hands
- Stay home when you are sick
- Get tested
- Get vaccinated

Staff Morale / Health

The following list of possibilities were brainstormed options from employees and board members.

Direct Support	Advantages	Plan
Community-Building / Wellness	<p>Providing more opportunities for team or community building will help boost staff morale and mental health. Some teachers</p> <p>One teacher expressed may view these activities as time-consuming and unnecessary.</p>	Some schools are soliciting ideas and implementing efforts. A grant from Mayo will be allocated to the District Wellness Committee.
Volunteers	This would provide needed assistance for teachers in their classrooms.	Bringing back volunteers may begin as early as March 1 st if case numbers are lower. Teachers will not be required to have volunteers.
Employee Assistance Program	Changing vendors could provide stronger service for those who need the assistance.	The Human Resources Department changed vendors this past fall.
Mental health support	Staff members also need access to mental health support.	This service could be provided in the Well@Work Clinic if the ESSER application is approved and Health Partners can find a provider.
Reduce Burdens		
Change expectations for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	Reducing the number of PLC meeting each month will provide some additional time for teachers.	The change to 2 PLC meetings each month was recently implemented.
Lunch supervision at elementary schools	If classrooms could eat in cafeterias, teachers could share supervision responsibilities.	A teacher will discuss this possibility with a building leader. Some teachers do not like the idea because they can work while supervising their classroom.
Reduce requirements	Eliminating or reducing non-essential work (such as providing more work time instead of staff development time, delaying summative evaluations, delaying curriculum writing) would relieve stress.	The administrative team will review.

Eliminating quarantining at elementary schools	Extensive quarantining means students miss time in school, thus impacting students, parents, and teachers.	This change is being proposed to the school board.
Eliminating face covering mandates at after-school activities.		More feedback will be solicited from employees after the Omicron surge declines.
Eliminating face covering mandates during the school day.		More feedback will be solicited from employees after the Omicron surge declines.
Personnel		
Class sizes at RWHS	Lowering class sizes in core classes would significantly help teacher stress, improve student behavior, and improve student performance.	Four additional teaching positions were posted. Social studies and PE/Health positions were filled. The science and English positions were not filled due to the lack of applicants.
Substitutes	More external substitutes are needed. Relying on internal substitutes burdens staff members.	Some permanent substitutes were hired. Bonuses will be given to substitutes if they work through February on a daily basis. Additional pay may also be considered.
Provide technology training for substitutes	If substitutes are more comfortable with technology, they will be more likely to return.	Contacts for each building will be identified to provide training and/or personal contact with substitutes.
School Day / Year		
Extension of Winter Break for E-12 or 7-12.	This would provide additional days off to address concerns about employee stress.	The School Board converted December 20, 21, and 22 to non-student days.
Distance learning one day each week at RWHS	This could provide some relief for teachers because of less physical contact time with students.	Distance Learning is proposed for RWHS on Fridays through February 25 th .
Shorten each school day at RWHS	This would eliminate the need for lunch in cafeterias, lessen supervision expectations, and give more time for classroom preparation.	The Superintendent does not recommend because it impacts students (including elementary students), complicates transportation, and risks meeting minimum instructional minutes required by the State.

Late Starts / Early Releases	Converting student contact time to teacher work time on some days would relieve some stress for teachers.	The Superintendent does not recommend because of a cost-benefit analysis. Students and families are impacted because of work schedules and teachers need to rearrange their entire instructional day.
Other		
Financial incentives to reimburse employees not to use personal or vacation leave.	This would lead to fewer absences and, therefore, fewer internal subs would be needed.	This is a negotiations issue.
Address student behavior	Throughout the state and country, there are reports of poor student behavior this year. Addressing this issue would significantly reduce stress on staff members.	Procedures are being reviewed to ensure appropriate placement in special education and alternative education settings. Building leaders will solicit feedback about current systems of disciplinary consequences for standard disruptions.

Recommendations

Recommendations are identified in the body of the Background Information Sheet.