

Red Wing Public Schools
2451 Eagle Ridge Drive
Red Wing, MN 55066



Phone 651.385.4500

www.rwps.org

School Board Meeting Agenda Item

Topic: Return to School
Contact(s):
Presenter(s): Karsten Anderson, Superintendent

Nature of Action Requested by Board

Board action
Board information or scheduled report

Background Information

Current Plan

On December 21st, the School Board voted for the following changes in learning models:

Monday, January 11 th	No School for Students
Tuesday, January 12 th	In-Person for Grades K-2
Monday, January 18 th	No School for Students
Tuesday, January 19 th	In-Person for Colvill on Fridays In-Person for Grades 3-4 Hybrid for Grades 5-12
Monday, January 25 th	First-Semester Online-Only Students Returning to School (if students choose to do so).

Safety Protocols

Shanda Jorgenson, the District's Health and Safety Consultant, will provide information about a variety of safety-related topics:

Quarantine Guidance

The COVID Response Team is recommending we follow MDE and MDH's strong recommendation that we keep the 14 day quarantine period for students who are a close contact to a positive person. Tracking individual students at a building level will be very difficult and many students could fall through the cracks. We will allow staff to qualify for a shortened quarantine period if they can follow all applicable rules. They are tracked by the COVID Response Team and will be held to the rules set forth by MDH.

Masks and Face Shields for Employees

The State strongly encourages staff members to wear both a mask and a face shield. The COVID Response Team strongly encourages staff members to wear both, but does not recommend requiring it. The custodial department has a surplus of face shields if staff desire to use them.

Vaccinations

An update will be given about vaccinations for staff members.

Other Safety Protocols for Employees

Shanda will provide information about other safety protocols for employees and answer questions that may be asked.

Human Resources

- Emergency Paid Sick Leave through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expired on December 31st. There have been questions about whether the school district should provide that leave even though it is not required. The Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) provided information about this issue on page 10 of their Leader newsletter, which is included as an “extra” on the board agenda. A proposed resolution is also included with this agenda topic; the resolution could be considered at tonight’s special meeting or on Monday’s special meeting.
- Amy French will provide an update about staff member and substitute availability.

Plans for Moving to Distance Learning, if Necessary

- A resolution was passed on August 10th about making changes to learning models. The district reviews COVID-related data 1-2 times per week and reviews staff and substitute availability on a daily basis. Except for instances involving specific classrooms and emergency situations, the Superintendent plans to ask the school board (in a regular, special or emergency session) to review and make decisions about changing to more restrictive learning models. As in the past, factors to be considered include staff availability, substitute availability, and COVID transmission in the school and community.
- Unless prohibited by the State, it is assumed that students with Intensive Learning Needs will continue learning in-person if other students are moved to a more restrictive environment as long as staff members are available and safety protocols are followed.

Compliance with the Safe Learning Plan

The State’s Safe Learning Plan has changed repeatedly over the past few weeks, including versions dated December 16th, 21st and 24th. Due to the complicated nature of COVID and varying circumstances throughout the State, there have been questions about consistency within the Safe Learning Plan and multiple interpretations shared by individuals representing the Minnesota Department of Education and other education groups.

Return-to-School for Elementary Students

The December 24th version of the Safe Learning Plan states “early learning programs and elementary schools that are not currently in an in-person or hybrid learning model, or have not already announced their plans to implement their in-person or hybrid learning model prior to January 18, 2021 cannot move to in-person or hybrid before January 18, 2021” (p. 10). There have multiple notifications to parents about students returning to school prior to December 24th when the updated Safe Learning Plan was issued:

1. On November 5th, the Superintendent emailed a copy of the E-Learning Plan to parents with the following provision:

Planning to Return to In-Person or Hybrid Learning

We want our students to return to in-person learning as soon as possible. Community COVID rates and trends will be regularly monitored while students are in Distance Learning, and the School Board reserves the right to make decisions about learning models at any time.

2. On December 7th, the Superintendent indicated that a return-to-school plan would be presented to the School Board on December 21st. Later in the meeting, the School Board approved a motion directing the Superintendent to provide a detailed plan to bring students back to school in January. Based on the discussion prior to the vote, it is presumed that the plan was to be brought to the School Board for consideration on December 21st.
3. On December 21st, the School Board approved a return-to-school plan during a public, live-streamed meeting.
4. On December 23rd, the Superintendent emailed a notice to parents outlining the return-to-school plan.

Rolling Start

The December 24th version of the Safe Learning Plan also indicates that “no more than three additional grade bands can be introduced into the building in a two-week time period when implementing an in-person or hybrid learning model for the entire school building...A rolling start does not need to be implemented if a school had already communicated a change in learning plan to their families prior to December 16, 2020, regardless of the plan’s effective date (pp. 10-11).

As per bullet #2 in the previous section, an announcement to parents may have been made prior to the December 16th deadline because the school board and Superintendent announced plans on December 7th to make a decision about learning models on December 21st. This is consistent with messaging shared by an official from the Minnesota Department of Education during a conference call on December 18th.

On January 5th, school officials met with representatives of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Goodhue County Public Health, and others to discuss the school district’s Return to School Plan. The MDE official stated that we do not need to conduct a rolling start.

Timeline

<p>August 10th</p>	<p>During a special meeting, the School Board approved a Resolution entitled “Adoption of Base Learning Model for the 2020-21 School Year and Other COVID-10 Related Matters” based on a model resolution developed by the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA).</p> <p>The resolution included:</p> <p>“...a more restrictive Learning Model selected and implemented by the Superintendent shall continue in effect unless and until...the School Board, in consultation with the Superintendent and appropriate school district staff and public health officials, deems it in the best interest of the School District and its students to implement a different Learning Model.”</p>
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November 5 th	<p>The Superintendent emailed parents with an announcement moving all grades to Distance Learning. The E-12 Red Wing Learning Plan, which was attached to the email message, included the following:</p> <p><u>Planning to Return to In-Person or Hybrid Learning</u></p> <p>We want our students to return to in-person learning as soon as possible. Community COVID rates and trends will be regularly monitored while students are in Distance Learning, and the School Board reserves the right to make decisions about learning models at any time.</p>
December 7 th	<p>During the School Board meeting, the Superintendent indicated that a return-to-school plan would be presented to the School Board on December 21st. Later in the meeting, the School Board approved a motion directing the Superintendent to provide a detailed plan to bring students back to school in January. Based on the discussion prior to the vote, it is presumed that the plan was to be brought to the School Board for consideration on December 21st.</p>
December 21 st	<p>The School Board approved a plan for students to return to school in January.</p>
December 23 rd	<p>The Superintendent emailed parents with the plan to return to school.</p>
January 4 th	<p>The School Board reviewed the return to school plan with regard to staffing availability and compliance with the Safe Learning Plan.</p>
January 5 th	<p>School officials (Pam Roe, Jim Bryant, Cherie Johnson, Joni Gorman, Karsten Anderson, George Nemanich) met with representatives from MDE, MDH, Goodhue County Public Health, and others to discuss plans to return to school. They did not express concerns about timelines on returning to school and specifically indicated we could bring kids with Intensive Learning Needs back into the building earlier than we had originally stated in our return to school plan.</p>
January 7 th	<p>A special meeting will be held to discuss returning to school.</p>

Recommendation

The School Board could consider the following motion during a special meeting on January 7th or January 11th:

I move to approve the Resolution to Extend Deadline for Leaves Granted by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.