

Red Wing Public Schools
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Red Wing
Public Schools
ISD # 256



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School Board Meeting Agenda Item

Topic: Learning Plan for 2021-22
Contact(s):
Presenter(s): Karsten Anderson, Superintendent
Shanda Jorgenson, Health and Safety Consultant, available to answer questions

Nature of Action Requested

Board Action

X

Board Information or Report

Background Information

Determining the initial learning plan for 2021-22 is incredibly complex because of the changing nature of the Delta Variant and varying perspectives. Critical considerations when determining the Superintendent's recommendations for face coverings, quarantining, and the learning plan include the following:

Student, Staff and Visitor Safety

- Implementing mitigation strategies such as face coverings provides the safest learning and working environment.

Importance of In-Person Learning

- Implementing mitigation strategies maximizes opportunities for in-person learning.
- Unlike last year, requiring face coverings reduces the need to quarantine. For example, there is generally no need to quarantine someone in close contact with an infected person if both are wearing masks appropriately.

Consultation and Decision-Making Recommendations

Recommendations were made after the following consultations and review: developed after consultation with the COVID Response Team, building leaders, and district leaders. The following were also reviewed:

- Consultation with the COVID Response Team
- Consultation with building leaders
- Consultation with district leaders
- Review of plans from other districts
- Review of feedback from parents, staff members, and community members
- Review of guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Review of guidance from the Minnesota State Department of Health
- Review of guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education
- Review of guidance from Goodhue County Health and Human Services

At a regular meeting on August 16th, the board considered three motions regarding the learning plan for 2021-22. The motions included the learning plan with various face coverings and/or quarantining proposals. None of them passed. This evening, the recommendation is to make decisions about these critical issues separately so that an overall plan can be approved prior to the beginning of the school year.

Face Coverings

The Superintendent recommends requiring face coverings for E-12 for the following reasons:

- This option provides the safest learning and working environment.
- We want students learning in-person as much as possible. In-person learning will be maximized if face coverings are required because the need for quarantining is minimized.
- Unlike last year, requiring face coverings reduces the need to quarantine. For example, there is generally no need to quarantine someone in close contact with an infected person if both are wearing masks appropriately. If face coverings are required, the recommendation is to limit quarantining.
- The Delta Variant is reportedly more transmissible and is infecting more younger people than earlier strains.
- Goodhue County is now considered a substantial transmission county. This means there are 50-100 cases per 100,000 in the last 7 days and a positivity rate of 8-10% in the last 7 days. MDH and CDC recommended that everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, wear masks in indoor, public settings when the county is considered a substantial or high transmission county.
- Last year's mitigation strategies worked extremely well in Red Wing with only a very small number of likely transmissions occurring at school.

Alternative Viewpoints

Those opposed to requiring face coverings often cite the following arguments:

- Wearing a face covering should be a personal choice.
- Students and employees have a difficult time wearing face coverings.
- Vaccinated students should not be required to wear face coverings because of lower risks.
- There are currently very low rates of infections of children in Goodhue County.
- This summer, daycare center, youth sports, and other activities had very low rates of infections.

- Most schools in the area, GCED, Big 9 Conference, and state are not requiring masks.

In a survey completed in July before the rise of the Delta Variant, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) learned that about 85-90% of districts were not planning to require face coverings..

Plans for most schools are still being formulated, but no neighboring school, no schools in the GCED, and only two Big 9 schools are currently requiring face coverings.

- Many students are likely to open enroll in other districts if masks are required.

Definition of Close Contact

Close contacts include anyone who lives with an infected person or who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. However, the definition excludes students who were within 3-6 feet of an infected person if masks were correctly worn by the infected person and close contact and other mitigation strategies followed.

Face Coverings Policy

Option A for Policy 808: Face Coverings assumes face coverings for E-12 are required whereas Option B assumes face coverings for only E-6 are required. If the board does not desire to require face coverings, no face covering policy is needed.

Required face coverings for E-12

The purpose of requiring face coverings is to minimize the risk of transmission and maximize the likelihood of in-person learning.

Students, employees, and others are required to wear face coverings indoors or on a school or contracted vehicle unless they qualify for an exception as per Policy 808.

Students, employees, and others are encouraged but not required to wear face coverings while outdoors (including athletes, spectators, recess, and courses) as long as they are not in sustained close contact with others.

Required face coverings only for E-6

The purpose of requiring face coverings is to minimize the risk of transmission and maximize the likelihood of in-person learning.

Students, employees, and others are required to wear face coverings in E-6 school buildings or on a school or contracted vehicle unless they qualify for an exception as per Policy 808.

Students, employees, and others are encouraged but not required to wear face coverings while outdoors (including athletes, spectators, recess, and courses) as long as they are not in sustained close contact with others.

Students, employees, and others in Red Wing High School and Tower View are not required to wear face coverings except when:

- Students are on school or contracted vehicles as per federal requirements.
- Students and staff with symptoms of COVID are being sent home and have not yet left school grounds.
- Other circumstances as determined by the department or building leader after consultation with the COVID Response Team.

No required face coverings

Students are not required to wear face coverings except when:

- Students are on school or contracted vehicles as per federal requirements.
- Students and staff with symptoms of COVID are being sent home and have not yet left school grounds.
- Other circumstances as determined by the department or building leader after consultation with the COVID Response Team.

If no action is taken:

Face coverings are strongly recommended but not required.

Quarantining

Definition of Close Contact

Close contacts include anyone who lives with an infected person or who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. However, the definition excludes students who were within 3-6 feet of an infected person if masks were correctly worn by the infected person and close contact and other mitigation strategies followed.

Quarantining Plan for E-6 Students

Elementary students in close contact with an infected person do not need to quarantine if the student and infected person were wearing masks appropriately during the sustained close contact. Otherwise, they will be quarantined.

Quarantined individuals may return on:

- day 7 if there is a negative PCR result (not a rapid antigen test) taken on day 5 or later; or
- day 14 if no test is taken or he/she is a household member of a positive case and is not vaccinated.

Quarantining Plan for 7-12 Students (Option A)

At the beginning of the school year, high school students in close contact with an infected person do not need to quarantine because of the universal face covering requirement. However, vaccination rates, school and community transmission rates, and overall compliance with the face covering policy may result in the implementation of quarantining requirements. When possible, parents will be notified if their child was in close contact with an infected person so symptoms can be monitored.

Quarantined individuals may return on:

- day 7 if there is a negative PCR result (not a rapid antigen test) taken on day 5 or later; or
- day 14 if no test is taken or he/she is a household member of a positive case and is not vaccinated.

Quarantining Plan for 7-12 Students (Option B)

High school students in close contact with an infected person do not need to quarantine if the student is vaccinated or if the student and infected person were wearing masks appropriately during the sustained close contact. Otherwise, they will be quarantined.

Quarantined individuals may return on:

- day 7 if there is a negative PCR result (not a rapid antigen test) taken on day 5 or later; or
- day 14 if no test is taken or he/she is a household member of a positive case and is not vaccinated.

If no action is taken:

The district will continue to follow practices approved on April 19th:

“Shortened quarantines beginning April 26th for students under guidelines outlined by the COVID Response Team and in the “Quarantine Guidelines for Students Who are a Close Contact to a Positive Person” as presented.”

Essentially, the guidelines call for a 10-day quarantine if there is a negative PCR test on or after the 8th day. Otherwise, the quarantine lasts 14 days.

Superintendent’s Recommendations

1. I move to approve Option A of Policy 808 as presented effective on August 30, 2021 with regular review by the school board at least one time per quarter.
2. If Policy 808 is approved as recommended, then

I move to approve the elementary quarantine plan and Option A of secondary quarantining plan as presented.
3. If Policy 808 is not approved as recommended, then

I move to approve the elementary quarantine plan and Option B of secondary quarantining plan as presented.
4. I move to approve the 2021-22 Learning Plan with inclusion of face coverings and quarantining decisions.