

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

Red Wing  
Public Schools  
ISD # 256  


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Phone 651.385.4500

www.rwps.org

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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  
Board Information or Report

X

#### **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. The attached DRAFT Learning Plan for 2021-22 is different from an earlier version for the following reasons:

- Guidance from the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health;
- Consultation with the COVID Response Team, building leaders, district leaders, and others; and
- Feedback from parents and community members/organizations.

#### **Critical Considerations**

##### *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.

## **Face Coverings**

This particular topic has generated the most discussion with strong views expressed in favor and against required face coverings. The attached DRAFT Learning Plan for 2021-22 includes three options:

- Option A: 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.

- Option B: 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.

- Option C: 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.

### **Superintendent's Recommendation**

The Superintendent recommends requiring face coverings for E-12 as described by Option A in the learning plan and option A for Policy 808 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.

- 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, 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 and only two Big 9 schools (with one more likely to join them) are currently requiring face coverings.

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

### **Quarantining**

#### Superintendent's Recommendations

The recommendation for E-6 students is listed in the learning plan for elementary 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.

If face coverings are required for 7-12 students, Option A (loose quarantine requirements) is recommended:

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.

If face coverings are not required for 7-12 students, Option B (stricter quarantine requirements) is recommended:

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.

### **Recommendation**

I move to adopt the following:

- Learning Plan for 2021-22 with Option A for face coverings and Option A for quarantining.
- Policy 808 Option A.