

Fall Learning Update



Fall Learning Update, August 6

Dear Albany Area Families,

Thank you for your continued patience as we plan for the fall. A lot of information is included in this update, and we will continue to share more information over the coming days and weeks from our buildings. As we have learned with COVID-19, things change rapidly, so what is shared today is subject to change. In addition, components in each plan may change, and we may be asked to move between the three state plans quickly. When plans change, Albany Area Schools will communicate those changes promptly.

As we continue to finalize details for the start of the school year, we need additional data from you regarding transportation and families seeking a distance learning option. Both are short forms to complete, but they are extremely important to our planning. The forms will be active for one week, and the links are below. Thank you in advance for completing these important forms.

MN Safe Learning Plan for 2020-21

The state process for reopening schools includes a 14-day look back period at the number of COVID cases in each county. Those numbers will drive the delivery model for schools within the county. Models include in-person learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning.

As of today, the Stearns County calculation is 13.97 which puts our schools' learning model into 100% in-person learning for students in Grades K-5 and a hybrid model for Grades 6-12. If COVID numbers go down in Stearns County, we could shift to 100% in-person learning for all students Grades K-12. See the link below for more specific details from the state. As the number is updated weekly, we will keep you posted regarding the status of our plans.

- [MN Safe Learning Plan](#)

Hybrid Model

The state has asked school districts to find ways in their hybrid models to have our youngest learners at school as frequently as possible. If our district needs to be in a hybrid model where 50% room capacity guidelines are in place, after closely examining our space audit and making some staffing and room changes, we are able to have students in grades K-5 at school everyday. To clarify, K-5 students will be in school 100% of the time for in-person learning and hybrid learning, but not distance learning.

The hybrid model for grades 6-12 will include creating two cohorts of students. These cohorts will be communicated with families August 17.

The following **AA-Distance Learning-BB** schedule would be used for grades 6-12:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohort A	In-person	In-person	Distance	Distance	Distance
Cohort B	Distance	Distance	Distance	In-person	In-person

The **AA-Distance Learning-BB** schedule was the preference of families and staff based on survey results. It is also supported by the school board and administration. This model allows for smaller cohorts of students when transmission rates are higher as well as time for cleaning between cohorts.

Students Opting Into Distance Learning Only (At Home Learning)

Full time distance learning for individual students is a required component of the state plan.

Those students and families selecting full time distance learning will:

- Follow a predetermined daily schedule
- Engage in synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (flexible) learning activities
- Participate in meetings with teachers
- Engage with other students
- Meet all grade-level and graduation requirements
- Demonstrate learning through multiple pathways

Students opting in to distance learning are making a commitment and may have limited flexibility to move between learning options.

Families choosing to opt into full time distance learning need to complete the following form by August 14.

[Distance Learning Only Opt In Form](#)

Transportation

Transportation of students continues to be one of the more challenging components of reopening plans. **Due to capacity limits and social distancing expectations on our buses, we are asking our families to please consider finding alternative ways to get your children to school.** Walking and dropping off are encouraged. We are currently working on a plan to open buildings early for student drop-off to assist in the parent drop off process. Students will be required to wear masks on buses, and they will be screened prior to entering the bus.

We are asking **ALL** families to complete this transportation form to help us plan for transporting our students. Please complete this form by August 14.

[Transportation Form](#)

Classroom Assignments & Schedules

Buildings spend a significant amount of time in the spring and over the summer organizing classrooms and sections based on the individual needs of each learner. In order to meet the needs of learners under the MN Safe Learning Plan, we continue to make adjustments to class assignments and lists. Buildings and staff will be working over the next two weeks to ensure we will provide the proper level of support for each learner at all times regardless of what model we are in. To that end, **teacher assignments, cohort assignments, and class schedules will be available by Monday, August 17, in Infinite Campus.**

Entrance Conferences

Due to social distancing guidelines and the unpredictability of an Open House, Albany Area Schools will be changing what the opening week of school looks like for students, parents, and staff. Back to School Workshops for staff from August 31-September 3 will be focused on preparing the learning environment, instructional strategies, technology, and safety protocols for keeping our students safe.

The first week of school (September 8-11), slated to start on September 8th, will be used to individualize the start of the school year for families and students. At the elementary schools, families will meet individually with their classroom teacher for an entrance conference (student and one parent). Secondary school entrance conferences will be scheduled using advisory assignments. All students will attend an entrance conference even if your child is opting into distance learning. Virtual entrance conference options will be available.

September 8	Entrance Conferences from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
September 9	Entrance Conferences from 8:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.
September 10	First day of school for all grades K-5 students
September 10	First day of school Group A students in grades 6-12
September 11	First day of school Group B students in grades 6-12

Health & Safety Blueprint

We will be posting our Blueprint for Reopening Schools on the school district website this week. This document includes information related to cleaning schools, health screenings, COVID protocol, communication, and many more important details.

As per the Governor's Executive Order and Minnesota Department of Health requirements, all staff, learners, and visitors will be required to wear face coverings while in district buildings and on buses. Each learner will be provided one cloth face covering.

MSHSL Activities

The Tuesday, August 4th, Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors meeting brought some answers and more questions as to what activities will look like throughout the state. At Albany Area Schools, the Huskies Cross Country and Swim & Dive teams will have a season in their traditional fall timeframe, but one that will look much different from past years. Planning and scheduling is now underway to give these athletes an opportunity to compete under new guidelines and restrictions. High School Football and Volleyball have been changed to a new “early spring” season that is expected to begin in early to mid March with traditional spring sports following that season, beginning in early to mid May and extending into the summer. We are looking at ways to continue to provide opportunities and experiences for our high school and middle school students - more information on everything activities-related will be coming in the next couple of weeks.

The goal of this message was to provide as much information as possible to our community following the governor’s announcement. Thank you once again for your patience and understanding as we prepare to serve your families in ever changing and unknown circumstances. We ask for your continued patience and grace as we continue to do things that have never been done before in our education system.

Once again, please continue to look for district and building updates and know that a final decision on the learning model for the fall will be coming soon. As Stearns County COVID-19 numbers are updated in the coming week, we will continue to work closely with our local health department to determine the appropriate learning model for the start of the school year. I will communicate as quickly as possible when decisions are made.

Sincerely,
Greg Johnson
Superintendent