



Dear Minnetonka Community,

Last Thursday, the School Board approved a hybrid return to school plan for Minnetonka Schools. We all sincerely wish the start of school could look as it has in previous years, but COVID-19 has left us all with difficult choices. The Minnetonka School Board and District administration remain committed to world-class, child-centered excellence for all students. We feel the plan selected will still provide an outstanding education for your child, despite the challenges and disruption that COVID-19 is presenting. We will work tirelessly to make that happen, as will principals, teachers, administrators and staff.

In these uncertain and challenging times, we recognize that timely and consistent communication and messaging must take on an even greater role in how our district functions, and we are committed to doing better. We have recently received a number of questions regarding the process used to determine the Back to School 2020-21 Plan. We wanted to share with you how we arrived at the plan that was chosen:

- The District formed teams to work through seven different back to school plan options.
- During the month of July and beginning of August, more than 500 people were involved in these planning teams, including parents, teachers, administrators and board members. These seven plan options were sent to District families on August 4.
- The School Board met for the first time to discuss the plan options at the August 6 School Board meeting. The goal of hearing all seven plan options together was to gain a deeper understanding of the rationale behind each and decide if the Board could align behind an option. It was also important for the Board to select a plan in a timely manner so that more detailed grade level and building level planning could begin.
- At this meeting, as requested by the Board, a recommendation was put forth by Superintendent Dr. Dennis Peterson. His recommendation pulled in key aspects of several plan options. Each building principal and administration collaborated and supported the Back to School 2020-21 Plan recommendation. The School Board had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the details of the plans and the recommendation at the School Board meeting.
- Ultimately, the Board unanimously voted to pass the recommendation.

- It is important to note that Option #1 (schools fully open) needed to be ruled out for a September 2020 start, as it does not currently meet the state guidelines.

The Back to School 2020-21 Plan adopted included these and other key considerations:

- MN Back to School Guidelines
 - Best plan given the current restrictions of MN Guidelines set by Governor Walz and the Minnesota Department of Education ([StaySafeMN](#)). The guidelines:
 - Use the COVID-19 positive case data for the counties within which the school district resides to determine the options available to that district
 - Prioritize in-person learning for elementary students
 - Prioritize students with special needs
 - Limit buildings to 50% capacity
 - Require provision of high quality e-learning option for all
- Learning Abilities of Students
 - All students will be served in this model regardless of their learning ability.
 - Building principals will have the expectation and resources to work with students and families to ensure an excellent educational experience.
- Support for Teachers and Staff
 - It is of the upmost importance to support our staff so they are safe and feel valued as we reopen our schools.
 - We know and appreciate that our incredible staff has a significant impact on the success of the plan and on our students' education and well-being.
 - The District is committed to working with our staff to determine alternative assignments, if needed, and wherever possible.
- Parent Feedback
 - A survey was sent to families and that data was used to formulate the options, and ultimately, the recommended option.
 - Emails from parents and staff and Community Comments submitted to the School Board helped to answer plan questions, provide further insight, and inform the recommended option.
 - E-learning for elementary age students often requires greater parent involvement, creating incremental challenges for these families including impacts to employment.

We are continuing to work with administration and building principals to enhance the educational experience for all students. The District will be sending additional communications, including a link to answer Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and further details regarding the back to school plan in the coming days. It is our expectation that the Back to School 2020-21 Plan will evolve and flex as changes are made in the [StaySafeMN](#) guidelines.

Parents, thank you for your support and for trusting Minnetonka Schools with your child's education. We believe that the Board-approved option will be successful with us all working together to make that happen. Our goal remains to provide excellence in student education while maximizing staff, student and family safety.

Sincerely,

The Minnetonka School Board
Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent

Resources:

[Back to School Plan 2020-21](#)

[Health Protocols](#)

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