

Plan for Reopening Minnetonka Schools in January 2021

Dear Parents and Students,

Last night, at the School Board Study Session, the School Board reviewed my proposed plan for re-opening Minnetonka Schools in January of 2021. It is a plan that is focused on maximizing learning for students in all grades. After reviewing the proposed plan, the School Board allowed the staff to move forward with the overall plan and stated it would officially vote on the plan at its January 7, 2021 meeting.

E-learning has been successful for most students this fall, due to the incredible work of our teachers and administrators to enhance what the District provided in the spring of 2020. However, there have been some serious issues. Many students are struggling in full e-learning, and some are experiencing mental health challenges. As we move forward, we will work hard to support all students in completing the 2020-21 school year successfully—both from an academic as well as a social and emotional perspective.

This past Wednesday, Governor Walz announced a decision aimed at getting the youngest learners in our state back in school full-time. We have taken the framework he has provided and have combined it with our own planning goals. The Governor will allow in-person learning with a modified requirement for social distancing and without the limitations of using 50% or less of classroom capacities for elementary-age students starting as early as **January 19, 2021**. This is the level of flexibility that Minnetonka has needed all along in order to get all of our students in school this year.

However, those alterations in requirements are replaced with more detailed expectations to keep teachers and other staff safe. Those details will be communicated to parents and students before January 19.

Here is our plan for re-opening schools in 2021:

Elementary Schools

January 2021- Grades K-3

On January 19, 2021, we will have elementary schools return briefly to the learning model that was in place before we went to full e-learning in late November. The one exception will be that from January 19-January 29, third grade students will all be in full e-learning. This is because the Governor has limited elementary schools to having just three grades at a time return for the first two weeks of the new plan, and we have chosen grades K-2. As difficult as that will be for third graders for those two weeks, it is necessary under the Governor's rules for us to have only three grades return at first. We will continue to provide childcare for third graders who require such care during those two weeks.

January 2021- Grades 4-5

Since students in Grades 4-5 are in a separate building from K-3, Grades 4-5 will return to school at the same time as Grades K-2 under the Governor's limitations. Students in

Grades 4-5 will shift from being in school four days per week to being in school January 19, 21 and 22 and January 26 and 27. Childcare will be provided for students who need it.

Students who are in school physically will need to wear masks, will be in pods and will continue with the six-foot distancing requirement. This plan will be used until January 29.

Teachers in Grades K-5 will have two planning days on January 28 and January 29 to prepare for implementing the in-school model on February 1. Childcare will be provided for students in Grades K-8 who need it.

February- Grades K-5

Beginning **February 1**, all elementary students in Grades K-5 will move into the in-person model at each of the six elementary schools. Sufficient desks and tables will be returned to the classrooms and new protocols will be implemented to assure safety of students and teachers and paras. Class sizes will be at the numbers the District usually assures, and there will need to be some adjustments for the students remaining in e-learning. E-learning will continue to be an option for all students.

Middle Schools

January 26-March 14- Grades 6-8

Middle school students will return to school on **January 26** using the model that was used for the first two and a half months of this school year, if allowed by the Governor. The same days of the week will continue to be utilized. E-learning will continue to be an option.

March 15- Grades 6-8

If allowed by the Governor at the time, middle schools will move to in-person instruction on **March 15**, and modified social distancing will be expected and classroom numbers will not be limited to 50%. Other safety protocols will be implemented, as required by the Governor. The two required planning days for that transition for middle school teachers will be on March 11 and 12.

High School

January 26-January 29- Grades 9-12

Throughout most of January, high school students will remain in full e-learning. On January 28, if the Governor allows it, high school students will be move to the hybrid model of learning two days that week, with half of the student body attending one day and the other half of the students on another day. The remaining days of that week will be e-learning.

Furthermore, full e-learning will continue to be an option for high school students. Since we do not have good numbers on which students will continue on e-learning and which will attend school on the hybrid model, we are asking all parents to again express their

choice on that topic. **This weekend, Principal Erickson will email you with instructions on how to submit that information.**

February 1- March 14- Grades 9-12

Beginning **February 1**, high school students will have full access to the High School, since students in Grades 4-5 will have moved from the High School to their respective elementary schools. They will still need to be on a hybrid model, with social distancing required and with classroom use limited to 50% of capacity. Half of the students will attend school on two days of the week, while the rest of the students on the hybrid model will participate in e-learning, and, then, the other half of the students will be in school two of the other days of that week and streaming would occur to those at home who had been in school during their two days. That will allow each student to be engaged at school in the hybrid learning model two days a week and e-learning three days a week. Students who choose e-learning full-time may continue to do so.

March 16- Grades 9-12

Beginning **March 15**, high school students will move to in-person learning for all students who wish to be at school (again, if allowed by the Governor). Modified social distancing will be expected, and classrooms would no longer be required to limit numbers to 50% of capacity. New safety protocols will be implemented, as required by the Governor. March 11 and 12 will be planning days for high school staff for the next transition.

Additional Details

Transportation restrictions will be eliminated when the students are in in-person learning. Those limitations will, however, continue as long as the schools the students are attending are in a hybrid model.

Face coverings will continue to be required for students in all learning models in the schools, and the safety and cleaning protocols will continue to be implemented. There will be other requirements by the Governor which need to be implemented, including having staff wear both a mask and face shield. There will also be more staff testing for COVID-19.

Thank you for your continued support and patience throughout what I know has been a very challenging year. We remain committed to you and your students and to providing you the best possible educational experience we can.

Dennis Peterson
Superintendent of Schools