



**School Board Special Meeting
Monday, December 21, 2020; 5:00 PM
Virtual Meeting**

I. Determination of Quorum and Call to Order

II. Report and Discussion

A. Elementary Learning Model Shift

Description: This report provides the planning conducted by Edina leaders since the Governor of Minnesota changed the guidelines for schooling in the pandemic. The report also contains new safety protocols that provide flexibility for bringing elementary kids back to school.

Presenters: John W. Schultz, Superintendent; Randal Smasal, Assistant Superintendent; Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning; Nicole Tuescher Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services; Jeff Jorgenson, Director of Special Services; Mary Woitte, Director of Communications; Mary Heiman, Coordinator of Health Services; Valerie Burke, Director of Community Education; Karen Bergman, Countryside Elementary Principal; Chris Holden, Normandale French Immersion School.

III. Leadership Updates



DEFINING EXCELLENCE

Board Meeting Date: 12/21/2020

TITLE: Elementary Learning Model Shift

TYPE: Discussion

PRESENTERS: John W. Schultz, Superintendent; Randal Smasal, Assistant Superintendent; Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning; Nicole Tuescher Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services; Jeff Jorgenson, Director of Special Services; Mary Woitte, Director of Communications; Mary Heiman, Coordinator of Health Services; Valerie Burke, Director of Community Education; Karen Bergman, Countryside Elementary Principal; Chris Holden, Normandale French Immersion School.

BACKGROUND: This report will provide the planning that Edina leaders have conducted since the Governor of Minnesota changed the guidelines for schooling in the pandemic. The report also contains new safety protocols that provide flexibility for bringing elementary kids back to school.

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion Only

PRIMARY ISSUE(S) TO CONSIDER: The Board is asked to respond to the planning presented in the report.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Report (next page)

Background

As Minnesota continues to prioritize in-person learning for young learners, the Safe Learning Plan has been updated. Starting on January 18, 2021, every elementary school across the state may choose to operate an in-person learning model without needing to consult their Regional Support Team, as long as they are able to implement all mitigation strategies outlined in the plan. Middle and high schools will continue to use the original process for determining their learning model, and must also implement the additional health and safety measures if they are providing in-person or hybrid learning.

One new mitigation strategy being implemented beginning January 4, 2021, is that all public schools providing in-person or hybrid learning must offer on-site testing to all staff that interact with students. This includes teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, support staff, nutrition staff, bus drivers and more. The state of Minnesota will provide training and saliva test kits so that schools can conduct this testing. Training and supplies will be available to nonpublic and tribal schools operating in-person or hybrid learning who wish to test their staff, as well. ([MDE, COVID-19 Updates](#)).

To meet these new expectations, Edina school leaders began a discussion to welcome back special education and kids who need additional support. Planning has also begun to welcome K-5 students into schools in a full-time model. This report provides planning, as we know it today, and timelines and activities related to welcoming students into Edina's school buildings. Plans are continuing to emerge but are subject to change, due to the many staffing and pandemic variables faced by school communities. The following goals remain in place for opening schools in Edina:

- 1) Implementing safety protocols and the guidance from Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, it is the goal to provide in-person learning to all K-12 students as soon as safely possible.
- 2) Provide an engaging caring, and inclusive culture in in-person, hybrid, and distance learning models.
- 3) Ensure all staff are trained in the safety protocols and provide professional development and planning time for teachers to manage students in the many transitions that come with the pandemic (contact tracing, quarantines, shifting to learning models).
- 4) Sustain and maintain learning model. We do not think it is in the best interest of student learning to shift back and forth between learning models, as we feel this exacerbates learning loss and challenges students from a mental well-being perspective.

Kindergarten-Grade 5

It is our goal to bring Edina K-2 students in-person on January 19, 2021, and Grades 3-5 will begin on February 1, 2021. This model shift remains conditional on the amount of community spread of the virus and staffing our schools (See Moving Forward at the End of Report). All students who were in the A and B cohorts will come together in one class with their Edina teacher. Students will remain in their classrooms throughout the school day, with the exception of physical education and recess. Art and Music will be taught in the student's homeroom classroom. All meals will be served in classrooms.

Students will initially attend a 4-day week until February 12, upon which the K-5 grades will begin the shift to 5-days/week. These remaining 4-day weeks will be used to provide training for

staff, COVID data monitoring, review and problem solving around safety protocols, and collaboration time with EVA teachers to map out the second semester curriculum. Teacher planning, staffing, and COVID data will be monitored to determine if this 4-day week will need to be extended. Edina Virtual Academy will continue for parents who select virtual instruction.

The State of Minnesota provided 5 days of professional development to switch between learning models. Two days were used to switch from hybrid to the current distance learning model. Two days will be used also to make this shift to K-5 in-person. January 14 and 15, 2021 will be used by teachers to prepare classrooms for in-person instruction which will include the movement of materials, equipment, and furniture.

Schedule for K-2 Learners

- January 4-13: Distance Learning
- January 14 and 15: Teacher Prep Days/School Off
- January 18: MLK Day, District Holiday
- January 19, 20, 21: Students in school full days (full class)
- January 22: Pre-planned district data day/School off
- January 25-February 12: Students in school full days M, T, Th, Fr
- February 10: Last asynchronous Wednesday for K-2 in-person and EVA learners (shift to 5-day weeks hereafter)
- February 15: President's Day

Schedule for 3-5 Learners

- January 4-29: Distance Learning
- January 14 and 15: Teacher Prep Days/School Off
- January 18: MLK Day, District Holiday
- January 22: Pre-planned district data day/School off
- February 1,2,4,5: Students back in school full days (full class)
- February 8,9,11,12: Students have 4-day week, M, T, Th, F
- Feb.10: Last asynchronous day for 3-5

February 15: President's Day ***Please note that Secondary Schools will remain in Distance Learning and will use the same guidance as before.***

Special Education and Students who Need Additional Support

Given current COVID-19 information known to the district right now, EPS seeks to implement the Governor's order by addressing the needs of our most significantly impaired students as outlined below.

- Students who require site-based special education programming will return to in-person instructional days as staffing and health guidelines allow.
 - Schedules (including amount of days in-person service is provided) and service locations may need to be adjusted to maximize the work force and to effectively work within the guidelines provided to us by the Department of Health.
 - Services for most will begin on January 11th.
 - Parents of students attending site-based programming will receive further communication from their case manager to discuss the schedule of services at their student's site.

- Additional students receiving special education services outside of site-based programming have been identified to receive a portion of their services in-person at all sites.
 - Early Childhood and Elementary aged students may begin in-person services by appointment as early as the 11th of January.
 - Secondary students will begin in-person services by appointment at the beginning of the new semester.
 - This process of identification was completed prior to Thanksgiving break.
 - Parents of students identified as requiring a portion of their special education services in-person will be contacted by their case manager.
- All remaining students receiving special education services will remain in full distance learning and will have services delivered to them as indicated in the Distance Learning Scenario section of their IEP's Contingency Learning Plan. These students will return to in-person services on the same schedule as their regular education peers.
 - Students in the full distance learning model will be monitored by their case manager. We encourage teams to prioritize enhanced virtual service for these students, making adjustments to increase engagement when possible. We do understand that this still may not be enough for some students. When this is the case the provision of in-person service by appointment may be considered.

The current timeline of the return process is outlined below. This schedule is preliminary as we continue to work through the specific guidelines provided to us by MDH. The schedule may also be impacted by available staffing.

January 4-8

- All special education providers will maintain current Distance Learning schedule January 4th through the 6th.
- Planning days for site-based student return will take place on January 7th and 8th (no school for students)
- All staff providing in-person services will be tested during this week to determine eligibility for a return to service during the week of January 11th.
- Parents of students that will be returning for services will be contacted to relay student service schedules

January 11

- Implement In-person return
- K-5 Site-based return to full-time in-person as staffing allows
- 6-12 Site-based will return to modified in-person service as determined by program as staffing allows
- K-5 Tier II services begin as planned (services by appointment)
- ECSE return to modified hybrid model and services by appt.

January 19

- Return of grade K-2 students to in person learning, except for EVA students

January 25

- 6-12 Tier II student begin in-person service

February 1

- Return of all grade 3-5 students to in person learning, except for EVA students

COVID Protocols Beginning January 19 ([MDE Safe Learning Plan, p. 11](#))

- Execute COVID-19 testing program (training and saliva test kits provided by the State; optional for school staff) every other week for all school staff, beginning January 4, 2021.
- Face masks and face shields must be worn together by school staff at all times.

- When educators cannot be six feet from students (small group and individual instruction), when possible add a clear barrier between the adult and student.
- Face coverings must be worn when engaging in indoor physical activity (e.g., during indoor recess, indoor physical education class, or when exercising in a gym)
- For early learning and elementary schools only: All student meal times will be held in classrooms. Physical education classes, art and music will be held in gyms and other classrooms, but students must remain in their classroom pod.
- For in-person only: three feet of physical distancing or more is strongly recommended

The State of Minnesota will be offering training to staff for testing, as well as masks and face shields. Administration will continue to provide equipment and materials needed for mitigation, as outlined in the Safe Schools Plan.

Transportation

Transportation will begin to expand routes on January 19 to transport kids attending in-person learning. Students will be encouraged to maintain a 3-foot distance, if possible. Six feet will be maintained between driver and students. We will continue to have seating charts on buses to help with any contact tracing.

Testing Centers

The State of Minnesota will help Edina schools prepare all sites for COVID saliva testing. Staff will be trained in the staffing protocol. The State encourages biweekly testing of all staff, although this is not mandatory. Test kits will be provided to schools by January 4, 2021.

Leadership Activities

Administration will continue to meet as school leaders with the Incident Command Team to monitor the COVID virus numbers. The State and epidemiologists still expect school leaders to make decisions to keep students and staff safe. Shifting from one model to another remains possible.

Tier 1 Child Care

Tier 1 Child care will be provided before and after schools

Considerations Moving Forward

The goal is to meet the model changes and the timelines, but there are many variables that will affect our ability to meet the above timelines:

- **Levels of community spread within the community.** Our public health partners support us returning students to in person learning at current levels of COVID, which are steady or declining. We will still need to shift our models as the virus becomes less or more active.
- **Staffing:** Community spread impacts the adults outside of the school setting. We have learned when community spread increases, staff attendance is impacted, due to illness or quarantine. Staffing may also cause a shift to a hybrid or distance depending on the level of staffing.

As we learn about parents' preference for the new models, we could potentially be required to hire more teachers, as classroom sections may change in EVA or "in person". This will require revisiting staffing and budgets. If an EVA student now returns to in classroom learning, they will have a different teacher for the second half of the year.

- **Testing Centers:** As of now we have little to no guidance for the protocols for turning schools and buildings into testing sites. Our ability to implement this protocol for our staff may affect our timeline to bring students back. Additionally, public health has told us that the first few weeks of testing could bring an increase in positive results, and as a result, instability as staff will have to quarantine. This is also true for asymptomatic staff members. This will complicate staffing for our in-person model.