



WEEKLY UPDATE TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 23, 2021

A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT CARLTON D. JENKINS

Dear Board Members,

This week marks the fourth week of our fall semester. Throughout this week, our district has continued to lean forward together during the ongoing pandemics of COVID-19 and social injustice. During our conversations with students, staff, families, and community members throughout the district, we are working to incorporate multiple perspectives on uplifting humanity in our refinement of policies and practices. This work will impact the people as we move toward the standard of excellence, while intentionally deploying an equity lens. We look forward to continuing these conversations during individual chats, in small groups, and in larger gatherings such as last evening's Facebook Livestream event.

One of the topics we have been discussing this week is how to safely host celebratory milestone events (such as Homecoming) in the midst of an ongoing global health pandemic. As we consider the social-emotional benefits of these events, we must acknowledge how fortunate our district is to be able to collaborate with our medical advisors during our decision-making. Their expertise broadens and deepens our discourse, which allows for richer and more comprehensive analysis as we grapple with multi-faceted issues.

As we consider celebratory milestones, it is important to acknowledge our national celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. In 1968, our nation began recognizing Hispanic Heritage Week; this commemoration was expanded to a month (September 15-October 15) in 1988. As we lean forward together with humanity, it is important to acknowledge the unique political, social, linguistic, economic, and cultural contributions of our LatinX community. Our district, state, and nation are strengthened when we embrace these contributions as well as the vibrant community which has given so much to the fabric of American life.

During our conversations, we are also inspired to discuss and address issues which are not so celebratory. As such, many of us have been disheartened this week by witnessing images of Haitian refugees being whipped by officials on horseback. These images remind us of the historic brutality of slavery as well as ongoing concerns about racial injustice. Our nation is largely a nation of immigrants. Surely our immense resources of wealth and intellect can lead us to better solutions than what is being illustrated by these disturbing images.

As we have discussions which educate our students, staff, families, and community about the prevailing societal issues, we must turn our attention to our own state government. Some recently proposed bills (such as AB 562) do not align with our district's core values or our country's aspiration to be a nation of ideas. We must push back against attempts to tell a limited history of our nation or marginalize groups historically excluded from the national discourse based on their LGBTQIA status. Leaning forward with humanity means affirming the inherent worth of all our neighbors.

Thanks for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to providing you with more updates on our district's progress and planning next week.

Sincerely,

Carlton

Carlton D. Jenkins, Ph.D.

P.S. Please note that there are couple articles attached to this *Weekly Update* for your information.

BOARD OF EDUCATION QUESTIONS

- **At-Risk of Not Graduating Plan Follow Up**
Attached is a memo and update from Caroline Racine Gilles, Executive Director of Assessment & Learning Supports, that outlines the language updates to the plan. It also explains the transition of this work to the Secondary Programs Department.
- **Madison Virtual Elementary**
Attached is a report in response to board member inquiries regarding the elementary virtual program, including impacts on students and impacts on staff.
- **La Follette Staffing and Support**
Attached are the responses to a board member's questions regarding La Follette staffing and plan of support as prepared by Interim Principal Thompson.
- **Opt-Out Report**
Attached please find the annual Opt-Out Report that provides an overview of the number of students who were "opted out" of state mandated standardized testing in the 2020/21 academic year.
- **New MEP Report on Middle School Student Belonging**
We are excited to share a new report from the Madison Education Partnership (MEP)! The report, *Making a Classroom a Community: Research on Middle School Belonging*, summarizes findings concerning classroom and school belonging in MMSD middle schools. Drawing on surveys of middle school students and middle school math teachers in spring 2019, the report provides insights into how classroom belonging reflects and shapes student learning. The project was supported by a grant from the [Student Experience Research](#)

[Network](#). The [summary](#) and the [full report](#) are available now and will be publicly released the week of September 21st. If you have any questions or want to connect with MEP, feel free to reach out or check out our [website](#).

OTHER INFORMATION

➤ **Addendum to Behavior Education Plan Policy 4502B**
Please note that Chairperson Carusi has agreed that the board can vote on the addendum at its upcoming Regular meeting on October 25, 2021. We are doing this to make the process consistent with the other policies that will also be voted on at that same meeting. Staff will prepare for implementation during this time.

➤ **Article re: Book Ban in York Pennsylvania**

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/15/us/book-ban-controversy-pennsylvania/index.html>

➤ **Community metrics for the most recent two-week window (Aug 30 - Sept 5):**

1. Average **daily case count is 107** and is trending stable
2. Average **daily percent positivity is 3.3%**
3. Percent with **at least one vaccine dose is 73.2%** - *84.6% of the eligible population (12+)*
4. Percent **fully vaccinated is 70.2%** - *81.1% of the eligible population (12+)*

Want to look at more numbers?? (Who doesn't?) You can learn more the trends and further breakdowns of the data in the [PHMDC Sept 16 Data Snapshot](#) and other associated resources on the PHMDC website.

➤ **Location of BOE Retreats**

We are attempting to confirm that we can hold our 2021/22 BOE retreats at Madison College at the Goodman South Campus, 2429 Perry Street, Madison.

➤ **Weekly News Report**

Attached is the weekly News Report which includes a curated list of local news stories directly related to MMSD over the course of the previous week with links provided.

➤ **Weekly Metrics and Ops Recordings and Agendas:**

9.21.21 Metrics Meeting, [Agenda](#) & [Recording](#)

No Weekly Admin. Ops meeting: Next Ops. Meeting is Thurs., Sept. 30



Community Events:

All dates for community announcements are posted on the [Board Community Activities Calendar](#)

- ✓ **Fiesta en la Terraza: Saturday, September 25, beginning at 8pm**
Cost: Free
Where: Wisconsin Memorial Union Terrace
What: A night of Latin dance (bachata, reggaeton, merengue, cumbia, hip hop & more) at the Memorial Union, hosted by Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Inc., with music by DJ Patron from Milwaukee. Great event for all ages to enjoy Latin dance right by the lake, more info can be [found here](#).

- ✓ **Monroe Street Festival: September 25 from 10am-5pm**
Cost: FREE to attend
Where: Monroe St. Madison, WI
What: During this annual festival, there will be celebrations of entertainment, children's activities, street sales, and "grab and go" food specials. The full schedule and more info can be [found here](#).

- ✓ **YWCA Racial Justice Summit: September 28-September 30**
Cost: Registration Fees
Where: Monona Terrace Convention Center and virtual online community spaces
What: This year's 2021 annual summit will be held in a hybrid model of in-person and virtual participation. The summit consists of keynote speaker presentations and a wide variety of workshops. More info on this year's theme and further details can be [found here](#).

- ✓ **Immigrant Rights and Justice - Sunday, October 3 at 6:30pm**
Cost: Free
Where: Webinar
What: Webinar with Aissa Olivarez, Managing Attorney, Community Immigration Law Center speaking on the unmet needs of immigrants in the Madison area and beyond.
More info can be [found here](#).

- ✓ **NAMI Walk Day - Saturday October 9, from 10:30am-2:30pm**
Cost: Free - but fundraising efforts are suggested
Where: In person at Olin-Turville Park and/or virtual participation
What: The annual 5k walk along lake Monona will be socially distanced and participants can choose to participate virtually as well. NAMI Walks support the collective effort for mental health awareness. More info can be [found here](#).

- ✓ **Fair Trade Holiday Festival - Saturday, December 4, from 8am-3pm**
Cost: Free to attend
Where: Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center

What: Madison’s premier shopping/trade event for the holidays featuring many vendors. One featured item is the All-Kids 2022 International Calendar. More info can be [found here](#).

OUR UPCOMING BOARD CALENDAR

- Mon., Sept. 27, 6 p.m. Regular Meeting
Virtual
- Wed., Sept. 29, 5 p.m. Student Senate
Virtual
- Wed., Sept. 29, 5 pm. Memorial Renaming citizen’s Ad Hoc Committee
Virtual

- Mon., Oct. 4, 5 p.m. Instruction Work Group
Virtual
- Mon. Oct. 11, 5 p.m. Operations Work Group
Virtual
- Wed., Oct. 13, 5 p.m. Student Senate
Virtual
- Wed., Oct. 13, 5:30 p.m. City Education Committee
Virtual
- Fri., Oct. 15, 9 a.m. BOE Retreat
(location tbd)
- Week of October 18 Board member briefings
Virtual
- Mon., Oct. 25, 9 a.m. Board Officers
Virtual
- Mon., Oct. 25, 6 p.m. BOE REGULAR MEETING
Virtual
- Wed., Oct. 27, 5 p.m. Student Senate
Virtual

ITEMS ATTACHED FOR INFORMATION

1. At-Risk Plan 2020-2021 Redline Edits and cover memo
2. Madison Virtual Elementary Board Inquiry Responses
3. Responses to La Follette staffing questions
4. 2020-21 Opt-Out Report
5. News Report—9.23.2021
6. Recommended readings from Dr. Jenkins:
 - a. “School Board Suspension or Waiver of Some District Policies/Procedures is Necessary During the COVID-19 Pandemic” (*WASB Policy Perspectives—April 2020*)
 - b. “Governing in the Wake of Upheaval” (*School Administrator—October 2020*)

TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Caroline Racine Gilles, Executive Director, Assessment & Learning Supports
Marvin Pryor, Chief Academic Officer

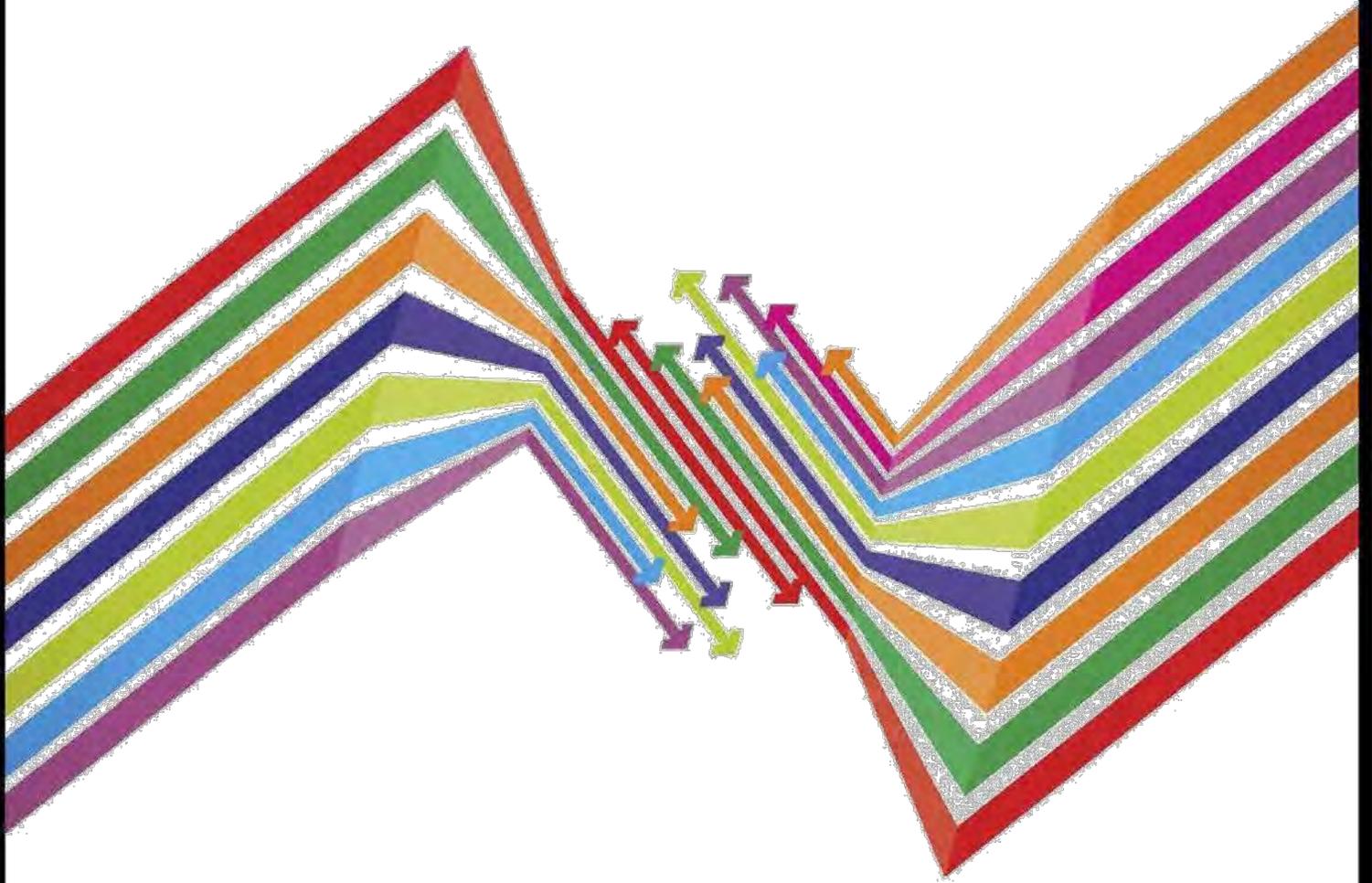
DATE: September 7, 2021

SUBJECT: At-Risk of Not Graduating Plan - Requested Language Edits & Plan Management

This is an update on the Board of Education's annual At-Risk of not Graduating Plan. At the full board meeting on July 26, 2021, board members re-approved the MMSD At-Risk of Not Graduating Plan with language edits. Attached you will find the red-line deletions and green language updates to the plan.

In addition to this update, we also have an update on continued plan management. Due to our central office restructuring, the Secondary Programs Department is best poised to manage the plan moving forward. We will work closely with this department to transition this work and support to schools.

Madison Metropolitan School District
Plan for Students At-Risk of Not Graduating



Approved by the Board of Education
on July 26, 2021

Vision for MMSD

Every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate from high school college, career and community ready.

Introduction

In accordance with state statutes and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) regulations the Board of Education must establish a process for identifying students at-risk of not graduating from high school and, annually, develop a plan for meeting the needs of those students in order to better prepare them for successful graduation.

This plan sets forth the means by which the District will identify students at-risk of not graduating and provide them with appropriate and adequate academic and social-emotional supports and intervention in order to obtain their high school diploma and successfully graduate college, career and community ready. This plan also includes strategies for parental notification and involvement.

Identifying a Student as a Student At-Risk of Not Graduating

Pursuant to Wisconsin State Stat. sec. 118.153(1), students at risk of not graduating are students in grades 5 to 12 who withdrew prior to completing high school or are two or more of the following:

- **Behind their age group in the number of high school credits attained**
A student shall be determined to be behind in his/her age group in the number of high school credits attained if the student is 2 or more semesters behind in credits or 2 or more quarters behind, depending on type of high school schedule.
- **Two or more years behind their age group in basic skill levels**
A student shall be determined to be behind two or more years than his/her age group in basic skill levels in Math and/or Reading if he/she falls into the lowest score range on the state-mandated assessment in Math and/or Reading.
- **Habitual truants, as defined in §118.16(1)(a)**
A student shall be determined to be "habitually truant" if he/she missed all or part of five days in a semester without an acceptable excuse.
- **Parents (teen parents; male and female and pregnant teens)**
- **Adjudicated delinquents**
A student is determined to have been adjudicated a delinquent based on reports received from the court system.
- **8th grade student who fall into the bottom range in all subject areas on the state-mandated assessment of knowledge and concepts, 8th grade pupils who failed the state-mandated assessment of knowledge and concepts and 8th grade students who failed to be promoted to the 9th grade**

School-based teams shall consider the above factors, at least annually, for all MMSD students in grades five through twelve.

If a team determines that a student is a student at risk of not graduating high school, the team shall initiate the process to provide written notice to the student's parent/guardian. The written notice, as required by PI 25.04(5), shall include the following:

- (a) The name and telephone number of a person the parent or pupil can contact regarding the school district's children at risk plan or program.
- (b) A description of the district's at risk plan.
- (c) A statement that the pupil is eligible to be enrolled under the district plan to serve children at risk.
- (d) A description of the at-risk programs available and how the pupil may participate in a specific program if more than one program is offered as part of the district plan.
- (e) A statement to inform the parent that he or she may select one or more programs in which the pupil may be enrolled, if the pupil meets the prerequisites for the specific program requested.
- (f) Describe the procedure for requesting that the pupil be enrolled in the specific at risk program selected by the parent. The request shall be in writing, or be given verbally to the person responsible for enrolling the pupil in the program. This person shall record the date and time of a verbal request and whether this request was made in person or by phone.
- (g) Identify the process that a parent may use if the parent disagrees with the planned services.

Parent Notification Letter

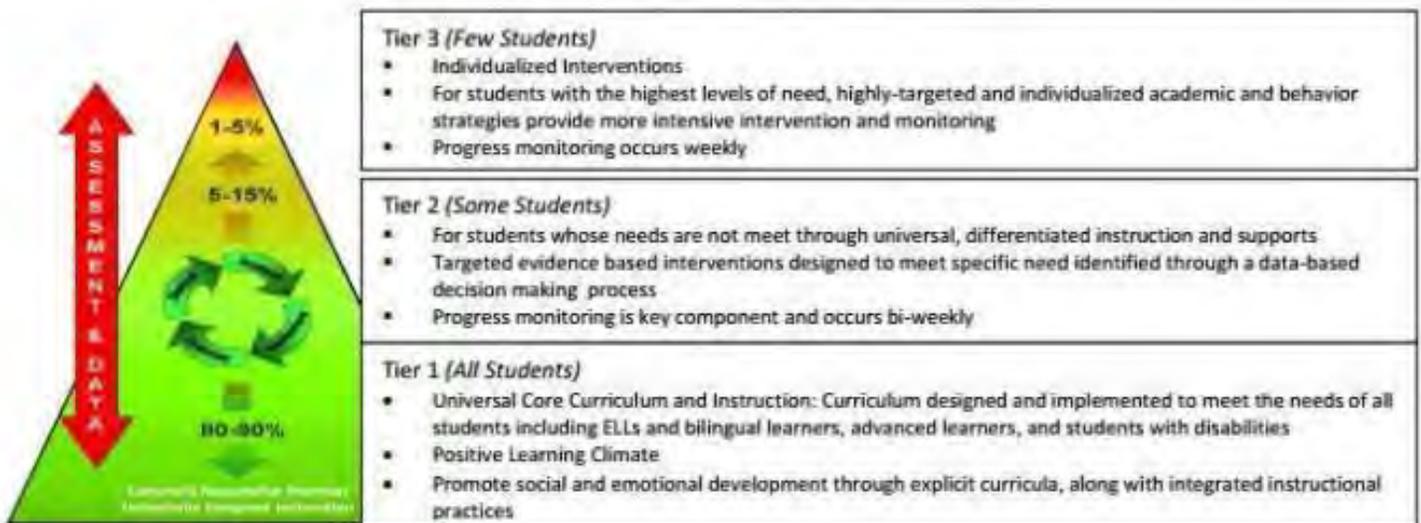
In MMSD, we combine our state-mandated at-risk notification for grades 5 - 12 with our district at-risk notification procedures (e.g., non-promotion in 8th grade.)

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

The MMSD, consistent with DPI's philosophy of providing a multi-level system of supports, provides students access to a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). MTSS in MMSD is the integration of evidence based instruction, intervention, and assessment to address the full range of student academic and behavioral needs present in today's classroom. In MTSS, the needs of all learners are identified and supported early through increasing levels of instructional time and intensity. By using performance data and monitoring learning rates and social-emotional-behavioral development of students, schools make important instructional decisions to meet the needs of ALL of our learners (e.g., students from different backgrounds, levels of language proficiency, and levels of attainment). MTSS is a key part of the broader MMSD strategic framework to support all learners and ensure equitable access to a robust, high quality education. MTSS provides the structure for the MMSD community to prioritize the academic and behavioral instructional needs of all students, including our students at-risk of not graduating, our Students with Disabilities (SWDs), students with advanced learning needs, and English Language (EL) and Bilingual Learners.

In a multi-tiered system of instruction and support, teachers provide quality instruction across three tiers that are universally designed, differentiated, culturally and linguistically responsive, and aligned to grade-level content standards. MTSS is a framework that provides for equitable access to high-quality, grade-level academic and behavioral instruction and supports for all students. The below graphic illustrates the intensity of supports offered to all students, including those students who are at-risk of not graduating.

Multi-Tiered Framework for Instruction and Intervention



Pre-K – Grade 4 - Prevention Programs and Supports Available for Students

Potential Indicators:

The state does not provide criteria for students in grades 4K through 4, however, some of the following common factors in students' lives from 4K through 4th grade may be potential indicators toward future identification of at risk:

- Chronic/severe behavior problems
- Academic delay in reading and/or math
- Habitual truancy (absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester)
- Any adverse childhood experience as perceived by the child

Programs and Services to Support Individual Student Achievement and Success in School

Within our elementary schools, there are a variety of supports available to encourage student success and meet individual learning needs so as to prevent future difficulties. MMSD provides a wide range of quality options to all students regardless of label or status. These supports are monitored on a regular basis to ensure that a student is making progress and reaching goals.

Below is a sample of supports offered to 4K - Grade 4 students to prevent them from becoming at - risk of not graduating. A comprehensive list and guidance for supports and interventions can be found in the MMSD Intervention toolkit (mmsd.org/intervention).

Non-Exhaustive List of Supports and Interventions - Grade 4K - 5

- Half or Full Day 4K
- Summer ~~School~~ Semester
- Math interventions ~~(e.g., Do the Math, Number Worlds, iReady)~~
- Reading interventions ~~(e.g., Leveled Literacy Intervention, Voyager, Six Minute Solution, Guided Reading groups, Reading Recovery, Descubriendo de la Lectura, Corrective Reading)~~
- Attendance interventions
- Behavioral interventions ~~(e.g., Check In/Check out)~~
- Small group interventions for social-emotional-behavioral concerns ~~(e.g., Concerned others, Aggression, executive functioning, social skills, etc.)~~
- Restorative response ~~(peer groups, conversation, circle)~~
- Intensive Support Team (IST) services

Grades 5 - 12 - Intervention Programs and Supports Available for Students Identified

As set forth above, identification occurs through an annual process upon review of statutory factors for determining a student's at-risk status. Once identified, school teams work with families/guardians and students to design and implement a plan of support. This process occurs in the [Student Supports and Intervention Team](#) or within the context of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team if the student has an IEP. Interventions are documented in a student information system and reviewed every 6-10 weeks by the appropriate team to ensure responsiveness to the intervention.

Non-Exhaustive List of Interventions and Programs - Grade 5 - 12

- Summer ~~School~~ Semester
- Math interventions ~~(e.g., Do the Math Now, Extended Math, Think Thru Math)~~
- Reading interventions ~~(e.g., Extended Literacy, Rewards, Read 180, System 44, Language!)~~
- Attendance interventions
- Small group interventions for social-emotional-behavioral ~~concerns (e.g., Concerned others, Aggression, executive functioning, AODA, SAIG)~~
- Behavioral interventions ~~(e.g. Check In/Check Out, Check and Connect, Wrap-around intervention and support [e.g., Rehabilitation, Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education, and Work (RENEW)])~~
- Restorative response (peer groups, conversation, Circle)
- ~~Alternative education programs (e.g., Shabazz City High School, Capital High, SAPAR, Horizon, Night School)~~
- Intensive Support Team (IST) services
- Restorative response (peer groups, conversation, Circle)
- Credit attainment monitoring to track ~~Annual~~ progress toward graduation ~~monitoring~~ (credit checks) and written communication with students and parents annually
- Referrals to credit recovery, summer semester or other learning opportunity to support meeting graduation requirements
- High School Completion Options
 - Grade 9-12 high school programming:
 - Shabazz City High School
 - Capital High
 - High school completion programming:
 - Micro Schools (Blue Lion High, Transition Academy)
 - Grad Academy
 - GEDO2 (GED Option 2)
 - Gateway to College
 - Operation Fresh Start
 - Madison College HSED
 - Omega School
 - Supportive and transitioning high school completion programming:
 - Capital High Parenting
 - Horizon
 - Night School
- *Extended graduation timeline

*The extended graduation timeline serves students needing additional time beyond the recommended four years toward completion (e.g. newly enrolled students who are ELL, students who have not met graduation requirements). The extended graduation timeline option decision is a collaborative process involving relevant data evaluations, communication with student, family and other school support staff. Students who receive Special Education services may be entitled to continued services, supports and programming through the age of 21, or until they have earned a high school diploma, as determined by the IEP team.

- Graduation timeline*

*For some students it may be beneficial to consider an extended graduation timeline that provides additional time and access to meet specific student needs (e.g., ELL newcomers, Students who are At-Risk). This decision to use an extended graduation timeline should be based on all relevant data sources and made in collaboration with families and other school support staff. Some students who receive special education services may be entitled to on-going services, supports and programming though the age of 21 or until they have earned a high school diploma, as determined by their IEP team.

Evaluation of At Risk Programming

The District will use established methods to monitor and evaluate academic and social emotional programs. Additionally, alternative schools and programs will be monitored using established data-review protocols including, but not limited to, the School Improvement Planning (SIP) process. District-wide and building-level data related to graduation rates, student achievement and attendance will also be monitored on an ongoing basis with particular attention paid to the outcomes for students identified as at risk of not graduating with the goal of reducing the percentage of students who meet the state definition. Existing data review tools and protocols, such as 9th Grade on Track, **annual credit attainment**, and the Early Warning System, will be leveraged for this purpose.

In accordance with State Statute sec. 118.153(2), the Board of Education shall review and approve this Plan annually by August 15.

Timelines, Roles, and Responsibilities

Below is a timeline of actions by month associated with identifying students who meet the definition of at-risk as set forth in this plan.

Month	Action	Person Responsible
End of July	Pull list of students who meet At-Risk Criteria based on previous school year data.	School-based staff (e.g., counselor, social worker, psychologist, etc.)
August - Mid September	Contact parents via phone or in person to foreshadow letter is coming.	School-based staff (e.g., counselor, social worker, psychologist, homeroom teacher, etc.)
September	Mail letters.	School-based clerical
October- November	Conduct parent/guardian meetings for successful academic future and document plan through student information system. Monitor and adjust plan as needed throughout the remainder of the year based on student response.	Student Support and Intervention Team (SSIT) and/ or IEP team
October - June	Set calendar dates to review plan with parents/guardians and documentation, hold team meetings as scheduled, continue or revise and adjust as needed based on student's responsiveness to the intervention supports and plan.	Student Support and Intervention Team (SSIT) and/or IEP team

Madison Virtual Elementary (MVE) Board Inquiry

9.21.21

Serving 558 students in 4k-5th grade, Madison Virtual Elementary (MVE) was created in response to parent feedback in which a virtual option was requested for scholars. Although MMSD has done a phenomenal job ensuring there are strong health and safety mitigations in our schools, we also understand that many of our families have various circumstances in which children, or family members have underlying health conditions. These circumstances are exacerbated by the fact that vaccines are not available for children under 11 years of age.

With an initial projection of 150 students, a total of 750 requests were received for virtual instruction. Although parents were asked to make a semester commitment to the elementary virtual option, we currently have approximately 558 students that are accessing virtual instruction. The number of students continues to fluctuate both with students returning to in-person and also those requesting virtual instruction.

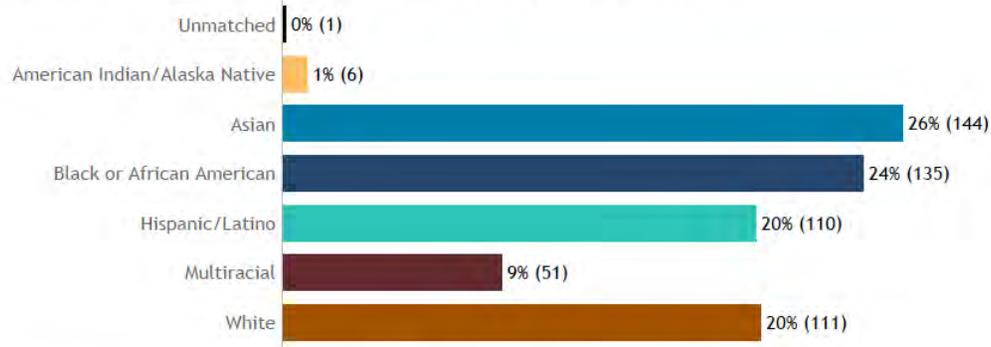
As there was an increase in the number of students we would serve in MVE, we needed to make adjustments to staffing. Three scenarios were presented; concurrent instruction, contracting with an outside company or utilizing our own MMSD teachers. The most sufficient means of staffing would be concurrent instruction. The staffing model for concurrent instruction would create the least amount of disruption for students and schools. Knowing that feedback from families, staff, the Board and MTI was not favorable in regards to concurrent instruction, a decision was made not to consider concurrent as an option at this time. In conversation with various stakeholders, a decision was made to utilize MMSD teachers to staff the virtual program. In utilizing MMSD teachers, there was an understanding that this scenario would impact schools. With this scenario classroom sections would be collapsed, creating larger class sections and teachers would be reassigned to teach virtually. All staffing changes were made prior to 3rd Friday and no classroom sections went above the board approved class size recommendations. Principals were presented with a recommendation for their school's instructional design, but the final instructional design was a school based decision.

We remain committed to [Goal 2 of our Strategic Framework](#) that the district and **every school** in it is a place where children, staff, and families thrive. We want to ensure that all our families are able to thrive through an equitable approach. We are fulfilling Goal 2 by providing a virtual option for all households that are medically fragile as we await a vaccine for children 11 years of age and younger.

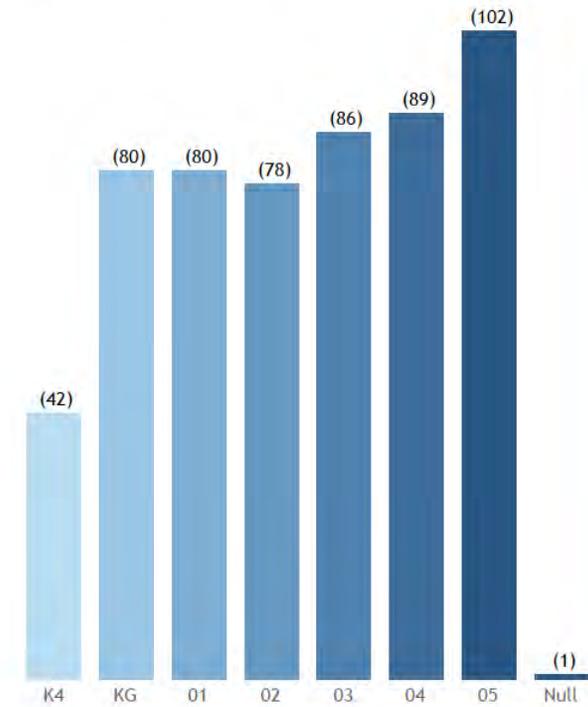


Participant Breakdown by Demographics & Grade as of 9/9/21

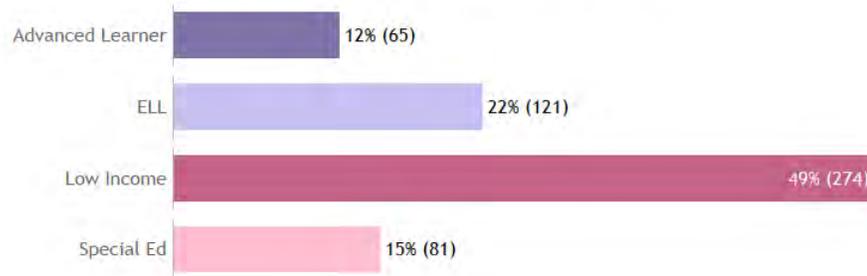
Elementary Students Preferring Virtual Option by Race/Ethnicity



Elementary Students Preferring Virtual Option by Grade



Elementary Students Preferring Virtual Option by Other Demographics





Whole District – MMSD: 15 Schools Impacted – Chavez, Crestwood, Elvehjem, Gompers, Hawthorne, Huegel, Lapham, Lindbergh, Midvale, Muir, Olson, Sandburg, Shorewood, Stephens, Thoreau

Impacts on Students

How many MMSD students switched to Madison Virtual Elementary?	553 elementary students
How many classrooms were closed and consolidated into other classrooms to accommodate them?	16 classrooms
How many total classrooms were impacted by these changes?	63 classrooms, including the 16 that closed
How many in-person students experienced a change in class size as a result?	1,078 elementary students
What percentage of MMSD elementary students experienced a change in class size?	9.4% of all elementary students*
How many MMSD elementary students changed homerooms?	322 elementary students
What percentage of MMSD elementary students changed homerooms?	2.8% of all elementary students*

Impacts on Staff

How many classroom teachers moved to virtual?	19 classroom teachers
How many classroom teachers were impacted by this closure?	63 classroom teachers**
What percentage of teachers in MMSD were impacted (among all school-based teachers at elementary schools)?	4.3% of school-based elementary teachers
What percentage of all staff at MMSD elementary schools were impacted?	3% of all school-based staff at elementary schools

**In 5-year-old kindergarten through 5th grade*

***Note: Staff impact is specifically addressing elementary homeroom teachers in this table. Cross-Categorical Teachers, Bilingual Resource Teachers, Physical Education Teachers, Art Teachers, Student Support Staff, and Library-Media Technology Specialists have had a high variability of their experiences. Undoubtedly, “impact” occurs for all teachers, but in very different ways from school to school and person to person.*

(1) How many teaching positions at La Follette are currently open and in which grades and which subjects?

- We opened the 2021-2022 school year with a number of openings in the following subjects Chemistry/Earth Science and Math. We have hired and filled all the positions. We have a lead on an experienced chemistry teacher that we will hopefully have finalized in a permanent position by the end of this week or next. We currently have a very capable long-term substitute in place. We may need additional support in recruitment if he does not decide to leave his current position.

(2) Have we been able to fill these positions with substitute teachers this week?

- Substitute teachers have been inconsistent with filling open positions. Since September 3rd, we have had a total of 31 substitute teachers in the school. Since September 3rd, we have had 32 unfilled positions requiring us to send students to Study Halls.

(3) When subs are not available, are students sent to study hall? Is there a maximum number of students per study hall? Is there a maximum number of study halls a student can have in one day?

- When we are not able to fill a position students teachers are posting assignments in Google Classroom and students are going to C17 where they are supervised by a sub and are directed to work in their Google Classroom (this is generally a separate space from study hall). Study hall is used when C17 is full but students are still directed to work in their Google Classroom to complete work. Unfortunately due to the sub shortage some students are experiencing multiple classes a day where they are going to C17 to complete work depending on the staff that are out. Without this model we would have a need for teachers to cover 160 classes in these first days of school. Teachers are at their capacity and are not able to cover right now on their prep hours.

(4) Is La Follette currently fully staffed with counselors, social workers, nurses, security staff, and the new restorative justice position?

- We are now fully staffed with the above mentioned support staff. It is important to note that just filling positions is the first step. We are developing our support systems and mechanisms to communicate about students and get plans and trusted adults in place. Our Restorative Justice position was just filled right before the start of school. This team has been tasked to immediately support significant student needs along with developing their ways of working. This will take some time.

(5) How many other staff positions are currently open and in which positions?

- We currently have 6 open SEA positions. We have hired 5 SEAs that are being processed by Human Resources. Since the start of school, we have had 39 unfilled SEA jobs. We have had 2 SEA subs in the building. Our special ed team is woefully understaffed. I wrote and

disseminated our own communication to our attendance area in order to generate awareness and interest in the positions. This resulted in 4 of the eventual SEA hires. We also have had an unfilled BRS position that we are in the process of filling.

(6) What is the plan to support La Follette HS in the short term?

- From my perspective I have received support from Nelson Render, Karen Kepler and her team. Gina Aguglia will be working with me on the development of the support structures and communication. MMSD communication department is working with me on family communication. Today, I did a school-wide Zoom meeting discussing our climate and challenging our students to own our school and guard our reputation. We need a moment to let our amazing professionals here do their work. We have not been together all 1595 of us. We are building our community. In essence, we have 2 full classes that have not been in our school or hardly been in our school these past 18 months. We are getting to know each other and how we can support each other. Our issues have primarily been with our Grade 9 and Grade 10 students.
- It is also important to note that we have a few students with disabilities that are Grade 9 and 10 students who have been educated in alternative programs in very small group settings that are now here. We lack sufficient resources (SEAs) to provide the best levels of support. High schools need more options for students with significant emotional/behavioral needs.

State Testing Opt Out Review 2020-21 Academic Year

As required by state statute, the following tables are being provided to give an overview of the number of students who “opted out” of state mandated standardized testing. There is much to consider in the information shared below: all state mandated tests were required to be given face-to-face during a time in which the district was generally in a “virtual” instructional setting. Even as schools reopened and students returned, not all families wished to return to in-person learning. Due to the closure of schools and the dates that students returned to in-person learning, these numbers appear extremely different from past years. The numbers below represent the following state mandated tests: the Forward for grades 3-8 & 10, the ACT+Writing for grade 11, the ACT Aspire for grades 9 & 10 as well as the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) as the alternate state assessment.

Table 1: Year-to-Year Comparison of State Testing Opt Outs

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Elementary opt outs	380	285	114	138	148	27	1947
Middle School opt outs	357	207	121	176	243	15	1904
High School opt outs	79	160	113	135	60	2	**
Total	816	652	348	449	451	44	3851

In the **2019-20** academic year, students did not take the state mandated tests other than the ACT on March 8, 2020. The number of student opt outs represent families that requested opt outs of all standardized tests at the beginning of the year.

In the **2020-21** academic year, families were given the opportunity to “decline to test” for safety reasons. This is the same as “opting out” for each test.

** High school data represents a mix of not tested reasons: opt outs, refusals, absence, etc.

The second table, on the next page, provides a look at the high school “not tested” numbers. For high schools, especially, the opt out numbers do not equal the total “Not Tested” numbers. The first number presented in each cell represents the number not tested (x) while the second number indicates the number expected to test (y). So each

school and test is represented by (xx/yy). The percentage not tested is calculated from these numbers. The percentage of students who did not test is included at the bottom.

Table 2: 2020-21 High School (Not Tested/Expected to Test)

School	ACT + Writing	Aspire Opt Outs
East High School	77/177	657/850
IAE/Capital	19/25	46/48
LaFollette High School	134/252	479/723
Memorial High School	99/308	641/1002
Shabazz City High School	4/13	19/25
West High School	89/361	570/1020
Total not tested/expected to test	422/1136	2412/3668
	37.1%	65.8%

The third table indicates the number of students by school who opted out of each test at the elementary and middle school levels.

Table 3: 2020-21 Elementary and Middle School State Test Opt Outs

	Forward Opt Outs	DLM Opt Outs	Total
Allis	79	0	79
Badger Rock	78	0	78
Black Hawk	93	0	93
Chavez	36	0	36
Cherokee	277	2	279
Crestwood	39	0	39
Elvehjem	34	0	34
Emerson	129	0	129

Anana/Falk	28	0	28
Gompers	34	0	34
Hamilton	260	1	261
Hawthorne	116	0	116
Henderson	193	0	193
Huegel	54	0	54
Jefferson	105	0	105
Kennedy	36	0	36
Lake View	32	0	32
Leopold	53	0	53
Lincoln	158	0	158
Lindbergh	11	0	11
Lowell	91	3	94
Marquette	59	1	60
Mendota	33	0	33
Muir	34	0	34
Nuestro Mundo	19	0	19
O'Keefe	209	0	209
Olson	36	0	36
Orchard Ridge	50	0	50
Randall	60	0	60
Sandburg	217	1	218
Schenk	110	0	110
Sennett	305	3	308
Sherman	160	0	160
Shorewood	22	0	22
Spring Harbor	51	0	51
Stephens	94	0	94
Thoreau	43	0	43
Toki	246	0	246
Van Hise	42	0	42
Whitehorse	51	0	51
Wright	63	0	63
Total	3840	11	3851



WEEKLY NEWS REPORT

Edition: 09/23/21

NEWS ORG	NEWS HEADLINE & LINK
WISC News 3	MMSD promotes anonymous reporting app for student safety -
Capitol Times	Madison School District officials unveil vaccine mandate plan for employees -
WISC News 3	Rapid testing increases at select MMSD schools - Channel3000.com -
WISC News 3	MMSD reports spike in coronavirus cases, people quarantined in latest COVID data update
WISC News 3	Madison West High School cancels two football games due to health protocols
WI Public Radio	'We're In Survival Mode,' Says One Bus Contractor As Driver Shortages, Mask Disputes Complicate School Transportation
WISC News 3	MMSD comments on TikTok trend of students damaging school bathrooms -
WI State Journal	Bumpy rollout for firm hired by state to conduct school-based COVID-19 testing
News 1	MMSD Suspension Plan
WI State Journal	4 finalists remain for Madison Memorial High School name change
WKOW 27 News	Wisconsin COVID cases highest among school age children
WI State Journal	Future unclear for MMSD Pathway Program
NBC-15	COVID creates dire nationwide teacher shortage
NBC-15	Lakeland Elementary uses goats to clear invasive species



POLICY PERSPECTIVES

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SCHOOL BOARD SUSPENSION OR WAIVER OF SOME DISTRICT POLICIES/PROCEDURES IS NECESSARY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic, school closure and “safer-at-home” emergency orders, and the everchanging governmental rules and decisions affecting school district operations have made the implementation of regular school district policies and procedures impractical or impossible in some situations. Therefore, the temporary suspension or waiver of some school district policies and/or procedures may be necessary or desirable at this time. There also may be circumstances that come up where a board determines that it is either not possible or not in the district’s best interest to follow the school board’s regular policy adoption process (e.g., mandatory committee review, two readings of a proposed policy prior to taking any action, etc.).

School officials should review current school district policies to see how they address the development, adoption, amendment, suspension, or waiver of policies. Some district policies include specific language addressing the suspension or waiver of policies or exceptions to the regular policy adoption process in unusual situations. For example, the *River Falls School Board’s* board policy development policy includes language addressing policy suspension. According to the policy, policies shall be subject to suspension only upon a majority vote of the board and only if the proposed suspension was expressly described in the meeting notice. The *Random Lake School Board’s* policy on board policy development specifically states that adoption of new or revised policies require two readings *except in an emergency situation* provided that public notice has been given in accordance with state law.

If a school district’s written policies do not specifically address the temporary suspension or waiver of school board

policies, or provide for exceptions to the regular policy adoption process, the board generally may vote to waive or suspend a board policy or waive the regular policy adoption process at a board meeting if proper notice of the intended action is provided in the public notice of the meeting. However, decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and, to the extent necessary, with the advice of legal counsel. In some situations, it may be relevant to consider whether taking such action might interfere with legal requirements or vested rights or create issues with due process, equal protection, or discrimination.

Suspending/Waiving Policies that Include State Law Requirements

While school boards may have general discretion to suspend or waive school board policies, or portions of board policies, that are addressing local policy positions, they do not have authority to waive state laws and regulations that are applicable to certain board policies without first obtaining, to the extent permitted, a waiver of such legal requirements from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

The DPI has authority under section 118.38 of state statutes to grant waivers to school districts from many of the requirements found in Chapters 115 to 121 of the state statutes and in DPI’s administrative rules. Prior to requesting a state law waiver, school boards are reminded that they must first hold a public hearing, as per section 118.38(1)(b) of the state statutes. According to DPI guidance, such public hearings may be conducted virtually or by teleconference. The DPI also reminds districts to remain attentive to Open Meetings Law concerns, as further covered in guidance issued by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (see DOJ’s March 16 advisory and a related supplement issued on March 20).

The WASB has provided two sample resolutions relating to requests for waivers of school district requirements under section 118.38, and they are available on WASB’s Coronavirus hot policy topic page on the WASB website under the Continuity of Learning – State Law Waivers tab. A school board may be able to use one of these samples to help

organize and document the board's approval of any waiver requests.

Once the board has held a public hearing and voted to request a waiver, school officials can submit a waiver request to the DPI. The DPI offers a simplified online waiver submission process for certain waiver requests, including the following:

- **Instructional Hour Waivers** – The DPI will waive the minimum number of hours of direct instruction required by state law for any school district that requests the DPI to do so due to the ongoing public health emergency. On March 21, Governor Tony Evers issued an emergency order, which suspended a portion of the administrative code related to requesting waivers of instructional hours [PI 8.01(4)(b)1 through 7 and (c)]. The DPI is now able to approve instructional hour waiver requests following district submission of a simple form.

According to the DPI in a School Financial Services COVID-19 bulletin issued on April 13, a waiver of the hours of instruction requirements also waives the 87.5 hours of 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) parent outreach that applies to districts that count 4K students as 0.6 FTE (rather than 0.5) within their student membership calculations. A separate or additional waiver for 4K outreach hours is not required. DPI still encourages districts to continue engaging 4K parents as much as possible during the COVID-19 disruption.

- **High School Graduation Requirement Waivers** – Information on how high school seniors who have not yet passed the civics test required for high school graduation can meet the requirement can be found on DPI's website. If there are extenuating circumstances during the ongoing public health emergency that prohibit students' ability to graduate in 2020 because they have not passed the civics graduation requirement, the district may request a waiver from this requirement using a special DPI waiver request form.

According to the DPI, school boards may also request a waiver from the state-required high school graduation (credit) requirements for those students who were on track with current coursework for them to have completed all state-required high school graduation requirements had the school year not been suspended. School boards could request this waiver through the DPI in accordance with information outlined on the DPI's website. The state-required credit requirements for high school graduation are four credits of English, three credits of social studies, three credits of mathematics, three credits of science, one

and one-half credits of physical education, and one-half credit of health (which can be earned in grades 7 to 12). School districts that are using virtual and distance learning on a school-wide basis to provide full course credit for the classes that have been affected by the closure of schools may not need a waiver of these minimum credit requirements.

- **Educator Effectiveness Evaluation Waivers** – School districts are required by state law and implementing administrative rules to (1) evaluate all licensed school personnel in their "first year of employment and, at least, every third year thereafter" and (2) use the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System to meet the evaluation requirements for principals and teachers. Due to COVID-19, the DPI recognizes school and district staff may struggle to complete the Educator Effectiveness process for 2019-20 Summary Year educators. The DPI has provided specific guidance to support school districts who wish to complete the Educator Effectiveness Cycle for educators in their Summary Year of 2019-20. If it is not possible to do so, the DPI will waive those requirements, upon completion of a special waiver form.

DEADLINE DATES CHANGED FOR THE 2020-21 FULL-TIME OPEN ENROLLMENT APPLICATION PERIOD

School officials should be aware that the State Legislature and Governor Tony Evers extended the various statutory deadline dates related to the regular full-time open enrollment application period by approximately 30 days for the 2020-21 school year. These date changes were included in 2019 Wisconsin Act 185, which went into effect 4/17/20. The new deadline dates are outlined below:

- **Deadline Date for Filing Full-Time Open Enrollment Applications** – The deadline by which a parent must submit an application for full-time open enrollment this year is May 29, 2020. According to information disseminated by the DPI, the open enrollment regular application period ends at 4:00 p.m. that day.
- **Resident and Nonresident District Responsibilities Once an Open Enrollment Application is Received and Related Dates** – Districts may not begin acting on open enrollment applications before June 1.

Nonresident districts must send a copy of an application to a student's resident school district and the DPI by the end of the day on June 1. According to the DPI, this should be done by entering all paper applications into the OPAL system by the end of the day.

The resident district must send expulsion records (if any) to the nonresident district by June 5. The resident district must send a student's individualized education program (IEP) records (if any) to the nonresident district by June 8.

- **Deadline Dates for Making Required Notifications**

– The nonresident district must notify parents of approval/denial of full-time open enrollment applications by no later than July 2. The notice must be in writing, which can be sent via email, and must, if applicable, include the reason for a denial. Approvals must include the school assignment.

The resident district must notify parents and the nonresident school district if an application is denied (notification of approval is optional) by July 9. The notice must be in writing, which can be sent via email and must include the reason for the denial.

Parents must notify the nonresident district of their child's intent to attend school in the district by July 31, or within 10 days of receiving notice of acceptance if a student is selected from an open enrollment waiting list. If a notice is not provided, the nonresident district may determine the student cannot attend.

Each nonresident school district that has accepted a student for attendance in the 2020-21 school year

must report the name of the student to the student's resident school district by August 7.

- **Dates Related to Appeals** – Parents whose applications were denied by nonresident or resident districts may file an appeal to the DPI within 30 days of the date the notice was postmarked or delivered to the parent, whichever is later. According to the DPI, the last day a nonresident district denial may be appealed by a parent to the DPI (unless denial was untimely) is August 3. The last day a resident district denial may be appealed to the DPI (unless denial was untimely) is August 10.

DPI has updated its reference resource titled "2020 Important Dates for Open Enrollment" to reflect Act 185. In addition to the items mentioned above, DPI emphasizes that July 1, 2020, continues to be the first date on which alternative open enrollment applications may be submitted for the 2020-21 school year.

School boards may wish to adopt a motion at an upcoming board meeting that expressly directs the district's open enrollment policies and procedures to be implemented according to the procedural deadlines specified in 2019 Wisconsin Act 185. However, it is possible that such adjustments may be implemented even in the absence of such a motion. Moreover, in all instances where there would be a direct conflict between existing local procedures and Act 185, the new state law clearly must take precedence.

School officials are encouraged to refer to WASB's [Coronavirus information and resources](#) on the hot policy topics page on WASB's website for regular updates relevant to districts during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

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Governing in the Wake of Upheaval

Lasting Lessons From Katrina

A researcher finds applicable lessons for leading extraordinary renewal in schools today from the unprecedented disaster in New Orleans

BY EBONY N. BRIDWELL-MITCHELL

In most years, this is the time when people start feeling settled into the new school year. Principals, teachers and students have the lay of the land as everyone works to reach benchmarks for staff and student learning needs and, in some cases, address the hurdles emerging to achieve those goals.

Of course, this year is unlike any previous year. Many of us now wonder whether it will be possible ever again to feel settled into school given the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond simply being settled in, will it be possible to achieve the best of results in our schools?

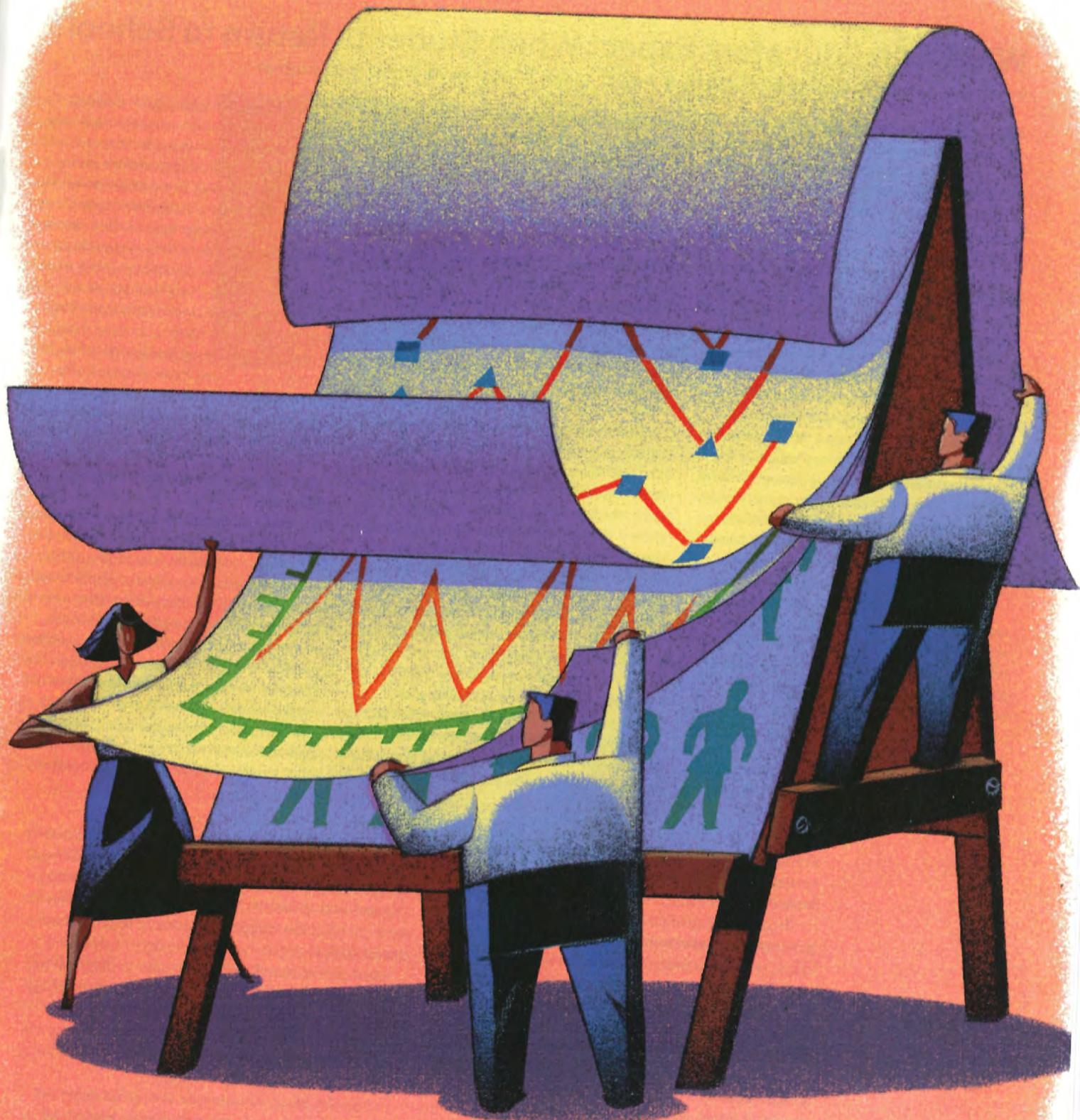
This is the same question every educator in New Orleans public schools likely was asking a few months into the 2005-06 school year after Hurricane Katrina struck with brutal force, kill-

ing 1,200 people, leaving thousands stranded and destroying core infrastructure and residences for hundreds of thousands of New Orleanians.

Even in the wake of such unprecedented disaster, less than 10 years later, student achievement on Louisiana state assessments had increased between 11 and 16 percentiles from pre-Katrina levels for students in New Orleans. College-entry rates had increased between 8 and 15 percentage points, and college graduation rates had improved between 4 and 7 percentage points.

Hurricane Katrina was far more localized than the widespread effects of COVID-19 across the country and globe. Still, the intensity of the devastation in New Orleans and the ability for schools to come back even better than before offers some clear lessons for schools now. Some observers have attributed revival to the New Orleans district's "charterization." However, as a co-author and I detailed in a recent case study, "Access, Autonomy and Accountability: School Governance Dilemmas in Post-Katrina New Orleans" for Harvard University's Public Education Leadership Project, some of the most important lessons from the public school experience in New Orleans are about governance.

Often, people associate governance with school boards. However, governance is essential to lead-



What Can Educators Expect When Students Return to School?

BY MEGAN RAUCH GRIFFARD, CASSANDRA R. DAVIS, SARAH C. FULLER AND CINTIA K. BORTOT

Thousands of students across North Carolina experienced significant disruptions in their schooling during Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018. The school shutdowns contributed to lengthy recoveries, with impact on the mental health of students and staff.

Our team of researchers at the Education Policy Institute at Carolina, a division of UNC-Chapel Hill, with funding by the National Science Foundation, studied how administrators at the school and district levels dealt with the recovery process of these recent natural disasters. Although the global COVID-19 pandemic is an event of unprecedented scale, there are important parallels from these previous disruptions that can inform practitioners and researchers as they move forward now.

We interviewed 53 school and district administrators and surveyed more than 3,000 educators across 15 districts in North Carolina following these two devastating hurricanes, which caused catastrophic damage and 70 deaths.

We have captured four takeaways from their experience relating to social, emotional and academic impacts. These may inform school leaders on what to expect when they reopen their buildings to students later this fall or sometime in 2021.

► Expect a long recovery.

Regaining a sense of normalcy took considerable time, even in schools that were fortunate

to have lost few instructional days due to the hurricane. As one principal remarked, “We were still teaching here, but being able to absorb and learn and retain (was) very difficult when you’ve been through a traumatic event.”

Nearly three-quarters of respondents said the hurricanes had a severe impact on instructional delivery, and 40 percent reported a significant impact on instructional quality. Teachers responding to the survey estimated it took more than a year for students to recover fully after Hurricane Matthew. School districts affected by both hurricanes found it especially difficult to manage recovery.

When school buildings reopen in 2020-21, school districts that have experienced recent disruptions or difficult circumstances prior to COVID-19 will see that the challenges of one will not replace the other. Rather they will co-occur, which can make recovery more complicated. Schools affected by Hurricane Matthew did leave district leaders better equipped two years later with the knowledge of the long, hard road for recovery. As one principal observed, “It’s a long-term process. It’s not an overnight fix. It takes years, and not just one year or two years.”

► Prepare for new logistical challenges.

As one educator in our study put it, “So many of the problems that we dealt with ... were out of our hands. We didn’t create that problem, but we were responsible for the solution.” Logistical

problems included tracking down students who did not return to school upon reopening, creating alternate bus routes for relocated students and coordinating provisions of supplies and resources to students and families.

To this final point, schools came up with creative ways to help those in need. One school passed out notecards to returning students and asked them to write down anything they needed for support. This effort was so successful the principal said, “That’s something we actually plan on carrying on even though we don’t have a natural disaster, hopefully not any time soon. Doing those check-ins with your student body is so important. Kids aren’t going to tell, but sometimes they will if you ask the question.”

► Navigate students’ emotions, trauma and grief.

Educators said students’ emotional well-being took priority over academics upon reopening. Teachers gave students time to talk, write journal entries or draw pictures about their experiences, while others created lessons and projects that helped students better understand the disasters. Trauma researchers have found these types of supports are important ways to help students process difficult experiences.

School leaders in the study cautioned these disasters can carry a long-term impact on students’ mental health. Principals talked about

ership at every level of the system: in schools, central offices, state education agencies and boards of education.

Simply put, governance is the decision-making process for answering three big sets of questions: (1) what’s our goal, who decides and how; (2) what’s the plan and how will work get done; and (3) what resources, expertise, activities and labor are needed to succeed? Good governance ensures the answers to these questions hold to 10 key principles that every superintendent should have in mind.

Decisions About Goals: What Is the Goal, Who Decides and How?

► **Set nested goals.** Good governance means broad goals can be set by those at the top, but those closest to the work should be empowered to

break down broad goals into more relevant, narrow goals. After Katrina, the broad goal of New Orleans’ Recovery School District was increasing educational access so new, mostly charter, schools were given wide-ranging autonomy to set site-based goals.

As student enrollment grew and goals evolved, the district centralized some functions. But doing so complicated day-to-day decision making for some principals, suggesting some goals in the more centralized system were not being set by those close enough to the work.

► **Set legitimate goals.** One challenge leaders at different levels face when it comes to setting goals is that diverse internal and external stakeholders must view the goals as legitimate. In New Orleans, a history of economic and social dispari-

the hurricanes triggering past traumatic experiences for some students, and others reported students seemed more agitated or more anxious. Teachers documented more challenges with student behavior, especially among those who had experienced significant loss.

Students struggled to cope with changes in living arrangements. In many cases, students

enrolled in different school districts after the storms because families had either lost their homes or a parent became unemployed. Some families moved in with relatives or friends in another area, which shifted family dynamics.

These major life changes were stressful for students. Three quarters of the educators believed that school resources helped students navigate their emotions. School social workers and counselors worked tirelessly to connect families with local organizations that could offer them supplies and support.

Over 90 percent of survey respondents said that students' mental health was a long-term concern after the disasters, and 77.4 percent felt that school resources were successful in helping students navigate their emotions.



Megan Rauch Griffard

► Expect myriad new stressors for teachers.

Emotional support for teachers was crucial to recovery, especially because the added responsibility of caring for students and their communities increased stress for educators. More than 80 percent of teachers said they had concerns about their own mental health after the storm, and 94 percent expressed concern about their colleagues' mental health.

As one district administrator

noted, "I think our teachers face secondary trauma all the time — again, not just from natural disasters, but from all other factors that our children face: domestic violence, poverty, mental health, abuse."

Additionally, teachers often sacrificed their own time and well-being to help their communities. One teacher in the study organized an outreach event to help the elderly the day after he had lost his own home to Hurricane Florence.

Some worried about the long-term emotional toll the crisis would take on teachers.

Recovery Recommendations

Participants in our study offered suggestions to improve recovery. All emphasized the importance of communication and collabora-

tion within districts and schools. Having clear, regular communication among leadership, staff and families facilitated a quicker recovery.

"The biggest thing is just that you always have to be flexible — flexible and understanding," said one district administrator. "Obviously, you always have procedures in terms of how to do things, but ultimately, we're in a people business, and you always have to be flexible in terms of trying to figure out [how to] help a kid or a family in order to make sure they get the needs they need. Then they can get back to a normal life. Then a kid can be successful in school when they come back."

Many educators wished they had access to professional development sessions that would direct them on how to modify existing curriculum structures. Administrators and teachers expressed support for adjusting, condensing and expanding modules given that students lost critical instructional time from school closures. Others looked for ways to implement trauma-informed teaching practices to help students navigate the crisis.

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ties meant conflicting views between Black versus White community members, the established middle class versus the wealthy and poor, long-time residents versus newcomers and rural versus urban.

Explicit procedures and agreed upon rules for involving all relevant stakeholders can help with the legitimacy of goals, as with models sometimes referred to as cooperative governance, consensus governance and community-engagement governance.

► **Set motivating and meaningful goals.** Nested and legitimate goals may not be achievable unless they carry authentically important purposes and are emotionally motivating. For example, the equity goal set by the superintendent in New Orleans since 2015, Henderson Lewis, resonates

with many educators' deeply held values. Still, emotionally motivating and purpose-driven goals do not necessarily clarify the requirements of day-to-day work and decisions.

Goals also must fulfill a meaning-making, cognitive function. This includes goals being sufficiently clear, specific and coherently connected so people understand what to accomplish.

Decisions About Strategy and Structure: What's the Plan and How Will the Work Get Done?

► **Have a strategic plan.** Today on the homepage of the New Orleans Public Schools, there is an easily accessible multipoint strategic plan. Having a strategy or step-by-step set of activities and timeline for improvement might seem obvious. However, strategic planning can be difficult when more energy goes into fighting fires than planning



Harvard professor Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell studied school governance in post-Katrina New Orleans.

for the future. Good governance means making the time to plan, to put that plan into action and regularly check on progress.

Even so, a final plan, such as the one in New Orleans, rarely reveals the complexity of formulating and executing strategy, which has both external and internal components.

► **Develop an external strategy for partnerships.**

Leveraging external resources is key to accomplishing goals and was essential to New Orleans Public Schools getting back on its feet. This is one reason Paul Vallas, an early superintendent of the Recovery School District, partnered with Teach for America, The New Teacher Project and the Broad Foundation to address the district's teacher shortage.

Relationships forged with charter management organizations to initially run schools is another example of how the district leveraged external resources to accomplish its early goals. While the partnerships New Orleans forged are not right for every district, the kind of resourceful thinking about which partnerships are possible is.

► **Have an internal strategy for organization structure.** Good governance means not falling back on conventional roles, positions and departments but instead asking, "What is the best way to divide and coordinate work, even if it is not the way things have always been done?"

By 2012, New Orleans was answering this question by allowing for differentiated, autonomous work among its 60-plus schools. However, differentiation can limit collaboration and sometimes lead to inequities and lack of accountability. This explains why it is important to facilitate communication and relationship building among those who most need to be connected. This might include flexible, mutually agreed upon work guidelines, knowledge-sharing technologies, liaisons between offices or ad-hoc cross functional teams.

Decisions About the Work: What Resources, Expertise, Activities and Labor Are Needed?

► **Know what resources are required.** There are four essential elements for accomplishing work in any organization. The first is resources or all the materials, supplies, equipment, funding and physical space needed to accomplish goals. After Katrina, additional federal funding played an important role in recovery.

The importance of physical space is partly why Vallas, as the superintendent, prioritized a facilities management and improvement plan. Of course, in schools, it is not simply the total amount of resources that matters but also that resources are allocated to the right activities most closely aligned with goals.

► **Know which expertise is needed.** One reason for excitement about starting up New Orleans schools after Katrina was the possibility of selecting staff with the best expertise to serve the relatively small number of returning students. Putting the right person in the right role can be difficult because it is not always easy to know which expertise is needed and because those with needed expertise may be in short supply.

Hence, good governance focuses not only on recruitment, training and retention but also on encouraging staff to learn, innovate and solve problems together so they can develop new expertise to address emergent needs.

► **Identify appropriate activities.** Being overly prescriptive about work activities can undermine motivation, innovation and problem-solving capacity. Good governance instead involves identifying major activity areas, articulating the theory

of action for why activities would result in desired outcomes and providing guideposts and guardrails as activities are executed. Then, expert staff should be relied on to further delineate their key activities and encouraged to take risks to innovate as needed.

Doing the latter might have quelled dissatisfaction among some New Orleans principals when in 2012 then-superintendent Patrick Dobard revoked some principal autonomies to be more prescriptive about their work.

► **Invest in sufficient labor.** Labor is shorthand for time and effort. Some industries regularly conduct studies to determine how long it takes a qualified person to effectively perform their work. In schools, sheer effort too often is expected to make up for a lack of time. This plays a role in low teacher retention and school leader burn-out, both of which became issues in some New Orleans schools after Katrina.

Good governance not only makes realistic and fair estimates about how much labor is required to complete work but also supports and develops staff, so they feel a sense of efficacy and commitment over the long run.

Governing to Greatness

Disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the COVID-19 public health crisis cause devastation and despair for so many. Their impact touches every area of our lives and all sectors of society, notably schools. Still, nature's dependable, if indiscriminate, pattern is that destruction also is a source of renewal and a clean slate on which to write a new story.

Schools are no exception to this either. Thus, restarting schools in the wake of COVID-19 is an opportunity to rebuild school systems anew with taken-for-granted assumptions about how things have to be done already cast asunder.

Now that the school year is underway, have the big goals not only been prioritized but has everyone involved in accomplishing them had a chance to visualize and articulate what the narrower version of broad goals means for their own work? Do office heads and school principals have a strategy — internal and external — for accomplishing their goals?

In a time of shrinking resources, how much attention has been paid not only to how existing resources might be reallocated but also to promoting staff's shared expertise, sense of efficacy and mutual investment in a theory of action for the work.

As Mary Herrmann explained in her article

"The Contradictions of Learning Together" (*School Administrator*, April 2020), superintendents need to help staff think creatively about all facets of work — from partnerships to internal structure to making the best use of resources. Paying attention to the 10 good governance principles can help with this. They also can help ensure our schools not only get through the COVID-19 crisis but perhaps even thrive in much the same way schools in New Orleans did after Katrina. ■

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Leveraging Good Governance at a Cabinet Meeting

Visualize your next meeting of the superintendent's cabinet or maybe a gathering of your district's principals. The agenda of pressing items is in front of you. The heads of offices or schools are sharing their work, successes and current challenges.

Important decisions are being made — about student learning, teacher professional development, school improvement, parent engagement and community partnerships. Now think about how the three central governance questions posed in the accompanying article might guide the conversation.

Listen carefully for how goals have been set, who was involved and how. Are new learning standards not being embraced at one or more schools? Maybe offer advice related to setting meaningful, motivating and nested goals to help staff become more engaged in the work at hand. Maybe using cooperative or consensus governance at the school level would help teachers, as well as students and families, buy into goals.

Has progress toward planned school improvement goals stalled? Revisit what the original plan was, what strategy was set (if there was one). Were regular check-ins built into the work? Ask questions to determine whether the right structures are in place and whether possible partnerships have been forged. Does the plan need to go back to the drawing board?

As the meeting wraps up and there is a discussion about next steps, perhaps be a critical friend pushing the group to consider whether the appropriate activities and amount of labor have been specified. Help people think about how they and you can ensure the right resources and expertise are brought to bear.

In the end, good governance is about good school leadership — at every level, on an ongoing basis. The three guiding governance questions and 10 principles are a concrete foundation on which to not only build a strong school system for the long run. They also are the foundation for building good governance into the everyday work of running great schools.

— EBONY BRIDWELL-MITCHELL