



Dear Parents and Students,

I am pleased to send you an update regarding Minnetonka Schools' transition to full in-person learning for many elementary students and hybrid learning for many secondary students. E-learning will also continue for students who choose that model. I know this has been a very challenging year for all of you, and we are going into another important phase toward getting back to normal. These steps will not be normal yet, but they will get us closer to the way we do school so well.

We have made some important changes to the plan that I described to you on December 18. This week, a team of administrators from our District met with Minnesota's transition team to get approval for our proposed reopening plan for Minnetonka Schools in January of 2021. I am pleased to share that the state approved the initial steps of our plan, which include the move to in-person learning for elementary school by February 1 and the move of middle school and high school students to hybrid by the final week in January. It is also important to know that they will need more data on COVID19 incidence in late February before we can get full approval to move secondary students to the in-person model on March 15.

As I described in my last communication to you, the District has used Governor Walz's recent decision to fully open elementary schools in our state to move Minnetonka elementary students into that model on February 1 and to open our High School to high school students January 28. The Governor is allowing 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. However, those alterations in requirements are replaced with more detailed expectations to keep teachers safe. This change is the level of flexibility that Minnetonka has needed all along in order to get all of our students in school this year.

Here is our state-approved plan:

Elementary Schools

Grades K, 1 and 2 will return to hybrid briefly, from January 19 through the end of January and will move to full in-person learning on February 1. The Governor is allowing districts to just bring three grades in a school back as the first step. Since Grades 4 and 5 are in a separate building, they can also come back on January 19 and

will move to full in-person learning back in their elementary schools on February 1.

Unfortunately, we had to have one grade wait two weeks to get back to school. Grade 3 will remain in full e-learning through January 27 and will move to full in-person learning with all other elementary grades on February 1. We will continue to provide childcare for Third Graders requiring such care during those two weeks in January that they are on e-learning only.

We have made some slight changes in the plan for Grades 4-5. They will return to hybrid in the High School building for all four days of the week from January 19 through January 22. They will then have e-learning days on January 26 and 27, and they will move to full in-person learning in their respective elementary schools on February 1.

Throughout January, elementary students participating in hybrid will be in their pods (based on 50% capacity of classroom), and six feet of social distancing will be required, as will be face coverings for all students and staff. In February, although the social distancing requirement will alter to a recommended three feet (not required) for elementary students, face covering guidelines will continue to be required. There will be more COVID19 testing of teachers and paras during the in-person phase of the re-opening. We will be getting vaccinations for staff as soon as possible.

On January 25, 28 and 29, there will be no school for Grades K-5, as those will be planning days for elementary teachers, including e-learning teachers. We are working on the plans for childcare on those days, and more information will be forthcoming.

The elementary in-person model will be implemented with class sizes about the same size as we would have had this year without the pandemic accommodations, and we are needing to hire a few teachers to assure that class sizes will be at those levels. There will no longer be social distancing required on buses for elementary students.

Middle Schools

Our middle school students will remain in e-learning through January 22. They will return to the hybrid model on Tuesday, January 26. January 25 is a scheduled grading and planning day for middle school teachers. Social distancing of six feet and face coverings will be required in our middle schools. Social distancing will continue to be required on buses during the hybrid model's implementation.

It is intended that the middle schools will move to in-person instruction on March 15, if allowed by the Governor at that time. We may not get the final approval for that part of our plan until late February or early March.

High School

Grades 9-12 will remain in e-learning through January 22. High school teachers will have access to their rooms at the high school beginning January 25, and they will be planning for the opening of the hybrid model on January 26-27. High school students will start attending two days at the High School on January 28 and 29. About 80-83% of the students have chosen the hybrid model. Half of the students choosing hybrid will be coming to school on January 28 and the other half of those students on January 29. Starting February 1, half of the students will be attending school two days per week, half will be attending two other days and one day will be for specialized instruction and MAST. Specific details will be sent to students by the High School Principal. Social distancing of six feet and face coverings will be required in the High School.

High school students on e-learning only will receive streamed instruction along with the hybrid students who are not in school on their designated days. The social distancing on buses for high school students will continue to be required.

On January 25, 26 and 27, there will be no school for Grades 9-12, as those will be planning days for high school teachers.

I do want to give you one more detail that is not settled because the state has not authorized the District to implement it yet, and that is the expectation to bring all four high school grades in at the same time. The state is limiting elementary schools to just three grades at a time, but they have not determined if that expectation will exist for high schools. We will provide that detail as soon as we receive direction.

As noted above regarding middle schools, we will not get approval to implement the full return to school for high school students on March 15 until we get closer to that time.

Additional Details

Students in all grades will be provided e-learning-only opportunities as long as they or their parents choose the option this year.

I hope this provides you with enough details to make plans for the next several weeks.

I do want to thank all principals, administrators and additional staff who contributed to the planning efforts and to the Board for its support. I thank our great teachers for their flexibility and commitment to students. They have made every plan work. And, I especially want to thank parents and students for all you have done to make this year work. It has not been easy for anyone. We truly have the best employees, students and parents, and I am grateful to all for the incredible support throughout this year.

Dennis Peterson
Superintendent of Schools