



November 9, 2020

Prairie Families:

Due to continued and persistent increases in community rate of infection for COVID-19, combined with the impact this surge is having on student and staff attendance and safety, **we will be filing a waiver with the state of Iowa to enter temporarily into Online Learning (At Home) district-wide for PK-12 students with an intended start date of Monday, November 16 through Tuesday, November 24th. We will resume school on November 30 in an every-other-day hybrid for all students PK-12 through December 22nd (winter break).** Please know that this decision is pending Iowa Department of Education/Iowa Department of Public Health Approval, which could take 48-72 hours to receive. We are notifying all families of this intention so they can prepare for this move. If this approval is *not* granted we will move to the every-other-day hybrid starting November 16th.

Quick Summary

**All plans exclude students in Temporary Virtual Learning, which will continue in the current model through at least the end of 1st semester*

** Any changes for after winter break will be announced by December 22*

** Based on developing conditions, it may be necessary to move temporarily to Online Learning (At Home) for onsite students in the future. Where possible, this will be done on a building-by-building needs basis*

November 9 - November 13	Current / previously announced learning model
November 16 - November 24	Online Learning (At Home)
November 25 - November 29	No School (Thanksgiving Break)
November 30 - December 22	Every-other-day A/B hybrid

[Click here](#) for the updated learning schedule.

Since the start of this school year, we have done everything within our power as a school district to provide full onsite instruction to all of our students. This is what the vast majority of our parents have said they want and need. While every district has different resources, all school districts across Iowa are making every effort to ensure learning in this pandemic and respond to the needs of their communities. Many schools across the country have yet to return to in-person learning. Our ability to do so is a credit to our community and families.

Regardless of countless efforts by countless individuals at home and at school to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, rates of infection continue to climb in our community, state and nation. Listening to our families, we know that Online Learning (At Home) is a last resort for our District. We are aware and directed by the fact that anything other than full, daily onsite instruction will cause interruption to many of our families. While hybrid offers some relief by providing onsite instruction at least half of the week, this still has an enormous impact on our families. However, our data have brought us to this difficult decision.

We have received feedback from families on both sides of this issue and sincerely appreciate our families who acknowledge that we are acting with integrity and courage as we navigate next steps in this unprecedented situation. We remain committed to making data-informed decisions based on our current campus reality on a daily basis. Please know, we continue to do our best in service to our students and families in a time when

finding consensus in individual family needs and desires related to COVID-19 is very challenging. However, we are at a critical moment in our community and in our schools in balancing our desire to stay onsite with our need to prioritize student and staff safety.

Community spread continues to increase, almost tripling since this time last week in the counties we serve. At school, this community spread is resulting in increased contact tracing requiring isolation and quarantine for students and staff who are coming in contact with COVID-19 due to its increased presence in our community. This situation has escalated greatly in the past 5 days. We are at a point when our Consideration Matrix is clearly pointing to a needed, yet unfortunate, shift in our learning model. Not only are we battling this virus at school, we are battling this virus in the greater community. While the choices we make do not *ensure* we are protected from this virus, our choices can mitigate its spread. I am pleading for 100% of our school community and our greater community to choose to stop the spread in any way possible through their choices and behavior. Please wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, make good choices during the holiday, suspend large gatherings, and do whatever it takes to help us get students back to school every day as soon as possible.

Our students have now experienced two very inconsistent and abnormal school years. We are seeing varied impacts to students' academic and social-emotional development. The long-term effects of these impacts remain unclear. Additionally, families are struggling to find childcare, not only for hybrid, but for quarantines. Our staff is working tirelessly to keep students safe and continue learning at school while implementing new protocols, taking on extra duties due to substitute shortages and learning new methods to reach children in these difficult times.

Everyone is impacted by this virus. As adults, we had the opportunity for 13 years of *uninterrupted, typical* schooling, our current students deserve no less than our full effort to ensure this interruption ends as soon as possible. Thank you to all who have made sacrifices and difficult decisions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in an attempt to support our students with a return to a regular school experience as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding and consideration as we work to get students back to school.

In Service,
Doug Wheeler, Ph.D.
Superintendent