

Firebird Return-to-School Overview- 2021-2022

The following is our anticipated return-to-school plan for this fall developed by the administrative team with guidance provided by our school nurse. These plans were developed through consideration of what measures can reasonably be implemented in an in-person, school-based setting. We will continue to consider what measures will best meet the unique needs of our district based on the circumstances that may arise in a classroom, grade level, or throughout the entire school building. In addition, these plans will need to be adjusted based on any requirements that may be set by the Oneida County Health Department or the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC).

Safety

As we did in the 2020-2021 school year, Minocqua J1 School District (MJ1) will implement the following recommendations for preventative measures from the CDC: "Encourage students and staff to take everyday preventive actions to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses. These actions include staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol." To further assist with these efforts, the District has installed new handwashing stations in the commons that will be used immediately prior to students going through the food service line.

In June 2021, the Board of Education decided that the wearing of face coverings (masks) in our school building would become optional. Although the CDC recently recommended universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status, we believe that, at this time, we could support parental choice by continuing to have face coverings be optional in the school building. However, we anticipate that we will be starting the 2021-2022 school year under two orders (set by the CDC and the Transportation Security Administration, TSA) that require the wearing of masks or other face coverings on public conveyances (buses and school van). Masks will be available on the buses for those who need them. We will be monitoring these expectations and may make modifications when circumstances allow for it.

Through a donation (in 2020) from The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the District still has a significant supply of cloth face masks to provide a washable mask for students or employees that may want or need one.

The following are other CDC recommendations that we are not making requirements at this time:

- Employees and students will not be required to get vaccinated.
- Social distancing of at least three (3) feet is recommended when near people who don't live in the same household. This recommendation would be impossible for a school to maintain at all times.
- On-site COVID screening testing will not be pursued at this time, as we do not feel that we could ensure the proper implementation of this medical procedure.

Bus Transportation

Our current bus routes and number of enrolled students who ride them may support some of the CDC recommendations, such as assigned seating to keep family members together, encouraging single riders to sit by the window for social distancing, high seat back barriers, face coverings for driver and students, and disinfecting of the bus following each route. Note aforementioned face-covering requirements.

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Parent Drop-Off/Pick-Up and Visitors

For everyone's safety we will be limiting non-essential visitors. We will continue to utilize the pull-through lane in the parking lot by the main entrance for parent drop-off so that parents will not have to get out of their car and the south parking lot for pick-up. We have gotten quite a bit of positive feedback about this practice used last year.

Some of our regular educational activities will be suspended while we are limiting visitors to the building. Although we truly value our parent volunteers we will not be starting the year with any of these programs in place. We will monitor the circumstances to see if adding them later in the year is safe and feasible.

We are preparing to host our annual Open House from 2:00-7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 30, 2021. Participation is optional and should only be attended by those who feel comfortable in group gatherings. We believe that we can feasibly host this event as visitors will be coming and going throughout the five hour window and not all families will be in attendance at the same time. While many of the usual activities will be planned, activities such as face painting will not be held this year.

Teaching and Learning

We are developing a start-of-year plan that includes ideas for how to adjust if, and when, circumstances change. Our intent is to be in school, five days per week for grades K-8/four days per week for 4K, following the District calendar. Our plans will provide for brief terms of virtual learning and support for instances in which students need to stay home for health- or quarantine-related reasons. Anticipating that far fewer students/parents may be seeking full-time, full-year virtual learning, we are working to identify virtual learning partner agencies to support that need. Once we have more information about potential family options we will post them in the Firebird Flash.

We are reviewing our 2020-2021 efforts for student grouping and use of facilities at all grade levels. Depending on the circumstances at any given time, we may be limiting student and teacher travel throughout the building. These modified approaches may change frequently throughout the year and may require us to reassign staffing in order to support the likelihood of reducing communicable disease transmission through the entire school or building.

Food Service

We intend to continue with modifications to meal times and locations in order to reduce the number of students eating at the same time in our commons and to allow for sanitizing surfaces between groups. Breakfast will be held in the classrooms, Lunch will be held in the commons and multipurpose room. We are able to offer universally free breakfast and lunch to all students, as sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Out-of-School Activities

Only time will tell whether our students will be able to participate in athletics, field trips and other events that are being held at other schools or in the community. We intend to offer them if circumstances allow, but will need to follow any safety expectations set by the host for those events.

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Policy and Procedure

Returning to school during these unprecedented times is likely to cause many interruptions in our day-to-day operations and our ability to follow our handbooks and policy as currently written. For example, we anticipate that DPI will release new information about taking attendance, especially during times that students are in quarantine. Those changes will impact truancy laws and our local policy, but likely only for this school year. Similar changes could impact state testing and accountability, grading, and the Co-Curricular Code. We will do our best to keep the Board of Education and school community aware of these modifications as the circumstances arise.

Social Emotional

Almost a year and a half will have passed before we are able to have some of our students back in the school with us after being sent home in the spring of 2020 and choosing virtual learning last year. For some, it will be a child's return to participating in anything in a public setting. For others who were in the building, it was an emotionally taxing experience trying to maintain some semblance of normalcy in such an uncertain time. We know that our focus needs to be on helping the students and faculty feel comfortable being back together, practicing our new safety measures and helping students get back in the right mindset for learning. Although we are very concerned about the academic time that may have been lost, we first need to focus on the individual so that we can set the stage for students and faculty to be academically engaged and successful this year.

Ill Persons & Confirmed Cases

One of the most effective ways of reducing the spread of COVID or other communicable diseases is by people who are sick staying home. Our school nurse will work with families so that they are aware of what symptoms they should be watching their children for and the circumstances under which they need to keep them home.

We will continue to prepare for our response if a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID. However, we fully intend to take each diagnosis on a case-by-case basis, with guidance from our school nurse, in order to respond appropriately. The CDC has changed their recommendation for isolation during different stages of the pandemic, so it would be futile to script any steps at this time. Please watch for more information regarding potential circumstances that may warrant the temporary use of face-coverings, identification of close contacts, the need to quarantine and any health-related exclusion from school to be released closer to the start of the school year.

Resources

The following resources have been reviewed in developing this overview. Links may be frequently updated, so we will continue to monitor them and make decisions with guidance from our school nurse.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), *Information on COVID 19*
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/2019-novel-coronavirus>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Schools and Childcare Programs*
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/>

American Academy of Pediatrics, *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>