



New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Public Schools

Independent School District No. 2168

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Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.

2020-2021 School Year Learning Model Family Update

December 10, 2020

Schools Remain in Distance Learning

Dear Families:

At this time, both school buildings continue to be in *Distance Learning* through December 23 with a tentative return date of Monday, January 4, for some or all grade levels. The School Board plans to examine and consider revisions to the distance learning period at the December 21 School Board meeting.

The county-wide case rates continue to be high, but there might be some signs of a downward trend. Today's Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) published 14-day county-wide number for Waseca County is 123.88 for the period 11/15-11/28. Looking ahead to the 14-day period 11/22-12/5 to be published next week on December 17, Waseca County Public Health (WCPH) projects the overall case rate to be in the range of 85-90.

Today's Steele County MDH 14-day county-wide case rate is 157.32 for the period 11/15-11/28 and projects to be in the range of 135-140 for the period 11/22-12/5 to be published next week. Today's Freeborn County MDH 14-day county-wide case rate is 125.14 for the period 10/25-11/7 and projects to be in the range of 85-95 for the period 11/22-12/5 to be published next week.

While there might be preliminary signs of the county case rates trending down, the rates continue to be extremely high when you compare it to the initial MDH guidance school districts were to use when determining the learning model to begin the school year.

When looking at other metrics we are following, the number of cases within our four zip codes was 51 (up from 32 a week ago). The positivity rates in our three counties either increased or remained the same compared to last week. Steele County showed a positivity rate of 7.1%, with Waseca County at 6.4% and Freeborn County at 5.9%. As of today, we have 9 known positive cases within our school district (staff and students).

You may be aware of the new quarantine guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the MDH. Under special circumstances, the guidance allows for the consideration to shorten the quarantine period of a close contact. However, both the CDC and MDH continue to recommend a quarantine period of 14 days. There is an increased risk for transmission with the options for a shortened quarantine period. The person doing the shortened quarantine will need to monitor themselves very closely for ANY symptoms and isolate immediately if symptoms occur. The other mitigations put in place need to be followed very closely, such as, wearing a mask and 6 feet social distancing. The distancing can be very challenging in our classrooms especially with younger students.

At this time, NRHEG Public Schools will continue to implement the 14-day quarantine period for those students and employees identified as a close contact. The district is working closely with MDH and our county public health partners in determining if or when there should be consideration to permit a shorter quarantine period.

As of this afternoon, we are still waiting for an update from the Governor on winter sports and other activities. The Governor paused the start of winter sports through Friday, December 18. The Minnesota State High School League's (MSHSL) Board of Directors approved three potential options for starting the winter sports season with

Monday, December 21, being the earliest date possible if allowed by the Governor. The school district has not determined a start date for winter activities and if it will be different from the options approved by the MSHSL. If necessary, the School Board will meet the week of December 14 to determine a start date.

If you have a family member who is currently isolated due to testing positive, please make sure all other family members remain quarantined and contact the school nurse, Donna Olson, @ 507-416-2105, even during a distance learning period. In the event a child tests positive, we encourage you to contact Ms. Olson or MDH immediately so that contact tracing may begin. Having an accurate record of isolations and quarantines will be an important factor in determining when one or both schools will be able to return to *hybrid learning*.

Thank you for all you are doing to take care of yourself and those around you!

Dale Carlson
Superintendent