

For Immediate Release

Thursday, September 3, 2020

Contact: Mary Whitrock, Superintendent

WhitrockM@ripon.k12.wi.us

(920) 748-4600

COVID Update Shared with Parents Regarding Instructional Model

Ripon, WI – On September 3, 2020, Ripon Superintendent Mary Whitrock shared the following message with families regarding the start of the school year and future changes in the instructional model schools in the district are following:

“Dear Families,

Thank you for your help in making our first couple of days with students a success. It was wonderful to have our students back in the buildings interacting with staff. Everyone did a fantastic job with wearing masks and staff continue to reinforce as much social distancing as possible. This is a challenge at the MS/HS in particular due to students traveling to multiple classes and classrooms being too small to ensure physical distancing.

What is our district goal with regards to the learning model?

Our goal in the Ripon Area School District continues to be bringing students back to school and keeping students in school amidst the pandemic. We are striving to provide a safe face-to-face (F2F) option for all of our students while maintaining a virtual option for those who made that choice. Currently, our soft start to the school year has allowed us to develop safety routines and practices, to monitor the number of students on the busses and to make adjustments as needed. We are also watching the number of confirmed cases in each of our schools.

What would be the earliest we would have all students in grades 6-12 back face to face?

Noting the goal to have everyone back to F2F, we are watching what happens with the number of positive cases of COVID across our community and within our schools. If nothing (more cases, staffing issues...etc...) drives us to change to a virtual model prior to September 30, we would plan to go F2F at MS and HS beginning October 5.

Some of the criteria we would use to determine a change would be our:

- *Level or risk staying at the "low or moderate" level for our school district and then maintain it for 14 days (over the past three weeks, [Ripon has gone from low to moderately high](#)) based on FCHD data;*
- *Families keeping child(ren) home when they are sick and notifying their child's school with any concerns of potential exposures (this has been fairly good so far);*
- *Staff staying home when they are sick;*
- *Students and staff understand the importance of masking, physical distancing, hand washing...etc...*

What would drive us to virtual learning (hopefully temporarily) for one classroom, building and/or all buildings?

Changing to a virtual only model for a classroom, building and/or all buildings would be based on the volume of positive student cases, the volume of student exposure to positive cases, extensive student absences, the inability to provide solid learning opportunities and/or ensure the cleanliness of our buildings due to lack of staff, or Fond du Lac County Health Department (FCHD) needing to complete extensive contact tracing (i.e. if there is some large event in the community which causes the need for contact tracing on a broad scale). Also, a specific building(s) may need an extensive cleaning (short term closure - with potential to continue learning in a virtual format with our staff).

Have any students tested positive for COVID yet?

Please note, as you review the data in the hyperlink above, any students and/or staff who may have tested positive did so prior to the start of the school year. As of the sending of this letter, we have not had any reports of individuals being contagious during a school day. Should that occur, any students who had been in close contact would receive a call from their child's school the same day and by the health department within 48 hours. We would also send out an IC message to let all families know we had a positive case in our schools and to confirm that we have communicated via a phone call with any students and/or staff who were identified as a close contact as they would need to begin their 14 day quarantine.

I appreciate everyone's efforts to keep our students and staff safe by following the FCHD recommendations so we can keep our schools open and/or open them further now that we have started the school year."

Any questions about the event should be directed to Superintendent Mary Whitrock at
(920) 748-6400.

###