



November 10, 2020

Dear Norse Nation:

Thank you for your support and patience as we continue to navigate the impact of COVID-19. Our students and staff members' dedication to the safety protocols we have in place have mitigated the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. Coupled with your willingness to notify us of exposure to or diagnosis of COVID-19 and staying home when you are sick you have helped us respond to and prevent any outbreaks. Health leaders have touted that schools are doing all the right things to prevent the spread of this disease.

Unfortunately, the community at large continues to experience a significant surge in cases impacting the capacity of our health system and Muskegon County Health Department's ability to conduct contact tracing to contain the virus. The data on positive tests and quarantined individuals is currently increasing on a consistent basis. Both Mercy Health and Spectrum are reporting record level positivity rates and are approaching inpatient capacity limits that will impact our ability to access routine and elective healthcare. Additionally, as a region, our risk category has elevated to the highest level for epidemic spread of COVID-19. Our community's current positive test trend data has approximately doubled each of the last 3 weeks. Currently, we have two confirmed positive tests with staff and over 50 students quarantined due to Covid positive tests in their homes. These factors are all considered by district administration and the Board of Education in determining the health and safety of our students and staff - and thus our educational format

On behalf of the entire staff and school board, we desperately want to continue to offer in person school for our students. However, it is a possibility that remote learning may be in our future. We recognize that moving to remote learning presents other difficulties for our students and families. Working parents require childcare when school is not in session, potential technology limitations, and the impact social isolation has on our young people also needs to be considered.

With all that being stated and staying with the intent of this communication, please start to proactively plan for your family. Please build upon what you learned from the end of last year and prepare yourselves to the best of your ability if we do need to move to a full virtual learning environment. Again, we are hopeful to avoid this but want our families to have information to assist them in doing their preparation.

Proactive Planning:

In a proactive effort, North Muskegon Public Schools has been preparing for a scenario that could result in moving into remote learning. With positive tests on the rise and the holidays approaching increasing the spread of the virus is a possibility. The impact of this could be substantial on our schools as students and staff are forced into isolation or quarantine. For this reason, the district is considering a plan that would move into remote learning if needed. This will occur should metrics related to hospital capacity, case positivity rate, and local case numbers impacting students and staff point us in that direction. We would resume in-person hybrid instruction as soon as safe to do so. Again, we are only preparing for this as a potential plan. No decisions have been made to change our current instructional plan. Our staff and students have been preparing for all-virtual instruction since school started in August but want to avoid “surprising” you without appropriate notice if we are forced into an all-virtual situation.

Here is what the virtual schedule would look like at each level:

Elementary Level - [LINK TO EXAMPLE SCHEDULE](#)

Middle School/High School Level - [LINK TO SCHEDULE](#)

Some Additional Points:

- All of us are a phone call, email, or virtual meeting away to help you or your child in the event we move to remote learning.
- It is the expectation of NMPS that no matter our learning format, we will progress our students forward each day, week, month and year through our curriculum. This will look different depending on the learning environment, the class, age level, student skill set, and many other factors. Please know, our teaching staff will communicate with all families of the expectations for each class/curriculum. These expectations will cover what you can expect from us and what we will expect from our students.
- Physical Health, Mental Wellbeing and Academic Advancement will continue to drive us forward.
- School sports will be determined based on MHSAA recommendations and our current rate of spread, isolation, and quarantine of athletes and coaches.
- Students requiring intervention, assistance, or other help may be able to schedule times to come into the building and receive support. This process is still being determined and will be communicated very soon as needed.

Please Be/Remain Vigilant:

I will close with asking all of us to now more than ever be committed to the recommended safeguards to avoid spreading COVID-19. This includes wearing a facial covering (a tight fitting, absorbent fabric that covers your nose AND mouth), maintain six feet distancing from others, and wash your hands often. Additionally, please consider social cohorts or limit your interaction with social events to avoid spreading the virus. Unstructured social activities continue to be associated with the spread of this virus.

I know we ALL want the pandemic to be over. That day will come. For now, we all need to be especially diligent and come together as a community to keep one another as safe and healthy as possible. I am confident the Norsemen will pull together - thank you for doing your part!

Take care,

Dr. Babcock