

Superintendent Report

School Board Meeting

April 19, 2021

Our Mission

Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.

Our Vision

To be the school district of choice, inspiring excellence in academics, arts, and activities.

The Superintendent Report summarizes the communication with the Board of Education (BOE) throughout the month including the weekly District Status Report. In addition, the Report includes the building administrator reports as well as other information believed to be beneficial to the work of the BOE and school district. Detailed information for the items listed under the District Status Report Summary can be found within each weekly Status Report from the District's website. I appreciate feedback as to how we can improve the report. Thank you.

1. Principal Reports

2. Weekly District Status Report Summary from February 12, 19, 26 and April 2 & 9.

A. Information, Communication, and Correspondence

- **News from Around the State and Beyond**

- [Pandemic takes toll on reading instruction](#)

- [K-12, college esports groups partner to boost student success](#)

- [Learning: Breaks can boost concentration, memory for students stressed by pandemic](#)

- [Poll: Pandemic has harmed mental health of nearly half of U.S. teens](#)

- [Studies: Students learn from "high-dosage" tutoring](#)

- [Report: Evidence backs in-person learning](#)

- [Kindergarten enrollment down nationwide](#)

- [Here are 5 words school staff used to describe fall 2020](#)

- [Minn. bill would change teacher-licensing system](#)

- [States consider strategies to recover learning loss](#)

- [How a drone will deliver internet access to rural students](#)

- [COVID-19 variant could have implications for schools](#)

- [Survey: Parents worried students are falling behind](#)

- [Teaching: New data highlight disparities in students learning in-person](#)

- [Teaching: Survey shows critical gaps for in-person learning](#)

- [Can summer school help recover learning loss?](#)

- [Pandemic drives down enrollment in teaching programs](#)

- **Virus Spread Impacting School Districts in Region**

- **Secondary School Electronic Sign Replacement**

- **Elementary Principal Search Update**

- **Teacher Negotiations**

- **Paraprofessional Negotiations**

- **Employee Recognition June 4**

3. **Board & Administrator for Board Members Monthly Publication – March 2021 Reflection - I** have provided a brief reflection on a few of the articles from the March publication. I hope you have had an opportunity to read and reflect.

- Don't disregard political ties to superintendent, board – The article encourages school boards to building relationships throughout the community including with media, elected officials and other districts. Boards should discuss political issues impacting the school district and to take steps to be active in the relevant political arena and discourse when it comes to matters impacting schools.
- Consider lessons learned from working remote – The article encourages school boards to review, reflect and learn what went well with students and staff were learning and working remotely. More specifically, board members are reminded to reflect on their own behaviors and perhaps correct “bad habits” including attention given to electronic communication during board meetings.
- Use evaluations to accurately assess board performance – The article reminds us that the “success of a district depends, in part, on the performance of the school board.” The author encourages school boards to regularly assess and evaluate the boards’ performance.

4. **Elementary Principal Search Process** - While the Board will take action at the Board meeting on my recommendation to hire the next Elementary principal, I want to acknowledge and thank those who participated in the process.

- Position posted March 12 – 31
- Staff and parent listening sessions held March 17 & 18
- 18 applications received by the March 31 posting deadline
- Mr. Meihak and I conducted 10 interviews round one interviews
- Round two interviews conducted on April 7 with 6 candidates and included a staff interview team and a parent interview team
- Finalist interviews held on April 12

Thank you to Mr. Meihak for his willingness and interest in being involved in the process from the start. Thank you to the Elementary staff and parent representatives for the input provided at the listening sessions early on in the process. Thank you to our Elementary custodial staff and office staff for making sure all the logistics were taken care of. Thank you to my administrative assistant, Sue Kulseth, for assisting us in making sure we had what we needed in a timely manner. Thank you to our interview team members for their interest and time being part of the April 7 interviews. Their involvement was extremely beneficial. Thank you to principals Doug Anderson and Dave Bunn for their assistance and participation.

Finally, thank you to the applicants and for their interest in our school district. We had a quality group of applicants which speaks highly of our school district.

5. **School Learning Model Update** - There have been no changes in our learning models and instructional delivery since the March School Board meeting. However, what has changed is the increasing threat of virus outbreaks within schools and communities across our state. On April 12, I sent the update below to families. My message stresses that our chances of remaining in-person for the remainder of the school year is in part, left to our students, families and staff. It is not just our behaviors out of school, but more importantly, what students, families and staff are doing outside of school.

I remain concerned about the increasing challenge of enforcing many of the mitigation strategies and methods we have been practicing this school year including staying home if one has symptoms, keeping as much distance from others as possible, washing hands frequently, avoiding crowds and wearing a proper face covering correctly.

Our county-wide case numbers for Waseca, Steele and Freeborn are starting to go in the wrong direction in the past few weeks. While we continue to experience a low number of cases, we are seeing virus outbreaks in other school districts happening very quickly. I am hopeful that all of us will remind and encourage those around us to maintain the health and safety strategies for the next 8 weeks.

4-12-2021 Family Update - In-Person Learning Models and Variant Spread

Families:

It has been several weeks since I last communicated with families regarding an update on our learning model status in both school buildings as not much has changed. When I last communicated with you, I shared that we would be completing our transition to in-person learning for all students by March 2. Since then, students have had the opportunity to remain in full-time distance learning as well. By the end of March, both school buildings had also transitioned to in-person learning on Wednesday mornings. Wednesday afternoons continue to be non-instructional time reserved for distance learning planning for staff.

Health and safety mitigation strategies continue in both schools. With the uptick in virus cases in the last two weeks throughout Minnesota especially in schools and activities, it is critical that students, families and staff not let up on those strategies that have been in place all school year including staying home when ill, keeping as much distance from each other as possible, avoiding crowds, washing/sanitizing hands frequently, and wearing a mask properly. There are reports that one of the variants (B.1.1.7) is spreading more rapidly among children impacting schools. Some schools are having to make difficult decisions on whether or not to move to more restrictive learning models with only two months left in the school year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the best and most effective action we can take as a school community is to continue with the mitigation strategies mentioned above.

Several of the metrics we have followed for most of the school year including the number of positive cases and quarantines within our schools, 14-day county-wide positive cases in all three of our counties, positive cases in our school district zip codes, and the positivity rates in our three counties reflect a potential trending upward which is the wrong direction we want to be heading at this time. It is my hope that students, families, staff and those throughout our communities do everything possible so that our students can remain in their school until the end of the school year. I do not want our students to have to change to a more restrictive learning model again this year, but this option will have to be considered if we experience an increase in cases and/or experience challenges with providing adequate staffing.

I am encouraged that in the past several weeks, families now have the opportunity to test as often as needed. All adults are able to sign up for the vaccine. In fact, students 16 and older now have the opportunity to sign up for the vaccine. Regular testing and the increase in those vaccinated will also help in our efforts to minimize the spread of the virus and keep our schools open for in-person learning.

If you have a family member who is currently having any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or testing for COVID-19, please make sure all other family members remain quarantined and contact the school nurse, Donna Olson, @ 507-416-2105 or lolson@nrhcg.k12.mn.us.

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

Dale Carlson, Superintendent

- 6. End of the Year Employee Recognition** - Please make plans to be part of hosting the employee recognition scheduled for Friday, June 4, beginning at 2:15 pm. More will be shared as plans are developed.
- 7. Graduation 2021** – Graduation 2021 plans are being discussed and developed. Mr. Bunn and Senior Class Advisor, Mrs. Bently, are reviewing the Minnesota Department of Health’s Indoor and Outdoor Venue Guidance to ensure all plans adhere to the guidance. At this time, consideration is being given to hold an in-person graduation ceremony for our 2021 graduates with limited seating for guests on Sunday, June 6, in the High School gymnasium. More information will be shared in the coming weeks.
- 8. Teacher Negotiations** – The Teacher Association and Board teams met for the first time on Tuesday, April 6. The Teacher Association presented their interests and proposal for the Board team to consider. The next meeting is planned for Tuesday, April 27, beginning at 6:00 pm. Board team members include: Dan Schmidt, Travis Routh, Rich Mueller, Karla Christopherson and Dale Carlson
- 9. Paraprofessional Negotiations** – The Paraprofessional Association has made a request to begin negotiations for 2021-2023. No date for the first meeting has been identified but there might be interest in mid-May. Board team members include: Rick Schultz, Travis Routh, Loren Schoenrock, Karla Christopherson and Dale Carlson
- 10. 2020-2021 National Honor Society Induction Ceremony** – I had the opportunity to attend the NHS Induction Ceremony on April 14 in the High School Gymnasium. Twelve new members were inducted. Congratulations to our inductees and to their families. Thank you to School Counselor Liz Stiernagle for organizing the event and serving as NHS Advisor. Thank you to Barb Hagen for her assistance in making sure all the details were addressed. Thank you to Mr. Bunn for his role in introducing current and new members. Thank you to our musicians and Director Mr. Otstot for providing wonderful music before and during the ceremony. Finally, thank you to Susan Schaub for providing the inspiring message for the ceremony. It was nice to experience an in-person recognition program. Yes, we all wore our masks and we had to limit the guests to family members, but it was important to acknowledge the accomplishments and contributions of this group of students by bringing families together to celebrate.

Thank you for all you do!
Dale N. Carlson, Ph.D.