



# New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Public Schools

Independent School District No. 2168

## District Office

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*Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.*

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## 2020-2021 School Year Learning Model Family Update

November 25, 2020

### Elementary in Hybrid Learning and Secondary in Distance Learning

Dear Families:

The School Board met in a special meeting Monday night to consider moving the Elementary School learning model from *hybrid learning* to *distance learning* and to consider extending the Secondary School *distance learning* period. The School Board determined to maintain the Elementary School in *hybrid learning* at this time. The School Board determined to extend the Secondary School *distance learning* period through Wednesday, December 23, with a tentative return date of Monday, January 4, 2021.

Tomorrow's Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) published 14-day county-wide number for Waseca County is projected to be in the range of 106 - 110 for the period 11/1 - 11/14. Looking ahead to the 14-day period 11/8 - 11/21 to be published next week on December 3, Waseca County Public Health (WCPH) projects the overall case rate to be in the range of 145+.

Tomorrow's Steele County MDH 14-day county-wide case rate is projected to be in the range of 144 -148 for the period 11/1 - 11/14 and Steele County Public Health projects the overall case rate to be in a similar range for the period 11/8 - 11/21 to be published next week. Tomorrow's Freeborn County MDH 14-day county-wide case rate is projected to be in the range of 125 - 128 for the period 11/1 - 11/14 and Freeborn County Public Health projects the overall case rate to be in the range of 145+ for the period 11/8 - 11/21 to be published next week.

We continue to work closely with our Regional Support Team (RST) which includes representatives from WCPH and MDH, to monitor the cases within our schools, communities, and counties. There continues to be great concern about the general virus spread throughout our communities and the impact on our families and schools. Please see the [COVID-19 Information](#) page on the District's website for the most recent metrics we are following.

In a recent conversation with MDH officials, there is great concern regarding the increasing cases in which the source of exposure is unknown in a community. This is adding to the challenges school districts are experiencing. One reason given for the significant increase in "unknown sources" is that some persons who have tested positive are unwilling to speak with a public health official about their case. There are some who do respond, but share very little information regarding those they may have come into contact with in the past 48-72 hours from testing positive or from first experiencing symptoms. As a result, there is little or no contact tracing done adding to the concern of an uncontrollable virus spread throughout our communities.

Thank you to those families who have reported to us directly if there has been a positive case within the household so that we can assist in the contact tracing. It is critical that we continue to hear from families so that we can assess the impact either on our Elementary School which continues in *hybrid learning* and when we need to consider moving to *distance learning*, or with our Secondary School while in *distance learning* in order to determine when we can start to consider bringing the Secondary School back to *hybrid learning* after winter break. As long as there continues to be a high number of positive cases being spread uncontrollably throughout our communities with a significant number of unknown sources, a delay in returning our Secondary School to *hybrid learning* is likely.

As we move into the Thanksgiving holiday, county, state and federal public health officials have cautioned all of us to stay home and celebrate the holiday within our households. Many school districts have taken proactive measures to move all grade levels to *distance learning* for an extended period of time following Thanksgiving in anticipation of a surge in the spread of the virus due to families traveling and gathering. With our school district not taking this approach, it is even more important that families within our school district follow the health and safety guidelines. If we do not do this, we are being told that it is more likely we will bring the virus into our Elementary School at an even higher level and expose our students, families and staff.

Beyond our school buildings, we owe it to one another to do everything we can to slow the spread of the virus which is overwhelming our health systems. We are already learning of stories close to our communities of individuals needing emergency care but are having to wait due to the high number of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals.

We are learning from the health care experts that the virus is spread by all ages including children at the elementary school level. While our positive case count at the Elementary School remains low as of this morning, this can change overnight. The school district will not hesitate to move the Elementary School to *distance learning* within a short period of time based on the positive case rate in the school, communities and counties. Unable to staff adequately due to isolations and quarantines of staff will also move the school to *distance learning* quickly. Families of elementary age children need to be prepared to make the transition from *hybrid learning* to *distance learning* within a day or two.

On behalf of the school district, I wish you a safe Thanksgiving. Thank you for all you are doing to take care of yourself and those around you!

Dale Carlson  
Superintendent