

Dear Watertown-Mayer Families,

As we began our 2020-2021 school year in-person at our K-4 elementary and in a hybrid learning model in our middle and high school, I was hopeful that we would remain in that learning model for our students. Unfortunately, due to the inability to maintain acceptable staffing levels, increases in local COVID-19 cases, and having multiple classrooms in quarantine, we need to make a shift in our learning model to accommodate these issues in the elementary, middle and high schools.

Following a consultation with representatives from the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Education and local public health concerning a recent spike in COVID-19 cases and projections for our community in the weeks ahead, The Watertown-Mayer School District has made the decision to transition grades K-12 to distance learning on November 30th.

This decision was made based on various data points; a dramatic increase in county and community COVID-19 rates, an increase in numbers of staff and students out of school due to quarantine and/or positive test results, severe difficulties in keeping our schools and programs staffed at an operational level, and projected increases in state, county, and community COVID-19 cases.

While the decision to move students to a distance learning model is not our ideal plan, we need to do what is best for the health and safety of all students, staff, and community members.

### **Current WM Dashboard Information/ County Information**

[WM Covid-19 Dashboard](#)

[COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)-Carver County](#)

### **K-12 Learning Model Change**

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade will transition to a distance learning model. Consultation with the Regional Support team regarding local COVID-19 rates, high levels of students in quarantine, and the inability to keep the elementary school fully staffed has caused us to bypass the hybrid learning model and shift directly to the distance learning model.

Distance learning for all students in grades K-12 will begin on Monday, November 30th. The district administrative team will meet with the Regional Support team during the week of January 11th to reevaluate all pertinent data points and to make a transition back to school recommendation and plan.

Please note, school will not be in session from December 24th - January 1st due to winter break. School will also be closed for students on Monday, January 18th due to a pre-scheduled staff development day. Please see the information below for specific details regarding the transition to this new learning model.

<b>Watertown-Mayer Public Schools Learning Model Transition Timeline Grades K-12</b>	
November 16 - 20	K-4 in-person learning and 5-12 hybrid learning schedule continues
November 23 - 25	<b>No school for K-4 students</b> - Teacher planning days for transition to Distance Learning on November 30th
November 23	5-12 Hybrid "Group A" Students in Person
November 24	5-12 Hybrid "Group B" Students in Person
November 25	<b>No school for HS/MS students</b> - Teacher planning for transition to full Distance Learning on November 30th
November 26 - 27	<b>No school for all K-12 students</b> - Thanksgiving Break
November 30 - December 23	Distance learning model in place for all students in K-12
December 24 - January 1	<b>No school for all K-12 students</b> - Winter Break
January 4 - 15	Distance learning model in place for K-12 students
Week of January 11	District meeting with MDH, MDE, and Carver County Public Health to review COVID-19 rates and to set plan for continuation or shift in learning models  Communication to be released to families regarding continuation of current learning model or shift to another learning model
January 18	<b>No school for all K-12 students</b> - Professional Development Day
January 19	K-12 tentative learning model shift based on consultation with Regional Support Team, watch for communication regarding this the week of January 11th.

### **Young Royals Preschool**

At this time, Young Royals Preschool will maintain the current in-person learning model. Per the Governor's Executive Order 20-94, districts are encouraged to continue providing early childhood programs pursuant to public health guidelines. Young Royals students will continue to attend during their regularly scheduled class dates and times. Please watch for further information directly from Young Royals Preschool in regards to further updates. We will continue to monitor the situation to determine if a transition to a distance learning model is warranted.

## **Kids Company Child Care**

All families with children in grade K-6 interested in child care will need to register for a new contract with Kids Company for distance learning. To enroll and for additional information please go to [Kids Company Registration Gr K-6](#). Registration for the "session" of childcare will start on Monday November 16 at 4:00 pm and will close when capacity is reached.

All registrations will be placed on a waiting list. Based on staff and space, we will then activate individual's registration. If we are not able to accommodate all registrations we will then prioritize based on critical worker statuses.

### How will prioritizing work?

All registrations are time stamped when received and based on capacity. We will prioritize based on the following;

1. Tier 1 critical workers
2. Children currently enrolled and attending
3. Children enrolled and signed up as a drop in status
4. New families

*November 23-25 will be non instructional days and families will be able to sign up for these under our non school day sign up. Non School Days are fee based for all children.*

[Children enrolled in the OST preschool age 4-5 years or Caring Hands will NOT BE impacted by any changes.](#)

## **Activities and Community Education**

Fall activities will finish the season, and Winter activity start dates are being monitored. More information will be provided over the next week.

## **Stop and Slow the Spread**

We know it will take all of us to do our part to bring our COVID-19 numbers down in order for us to return to in-person or hybrid learning in January. We are asking that parents continue to report positive cases and quarantine information to our district nurse Melissa Brandts during the time we are in distance learning. She can be reached at [melissa.brants@wm.k12.mn.us](mailto:melissa.brants@wm.k12.mn.us)

## **At-Home COVID-19 Saliva Testing**

Minnesota offers free, at-home COVID-19 saliva testing for people who believe they need to be tested, with or without symptoms. **This has been expanded to all counties in the state**, and can be ordered using the [COVID-19 Test at Home](#). Right now families can order up to five test kits per household. Families will be asked if they have insurance, but the state will cover the costs for any uninsured or underinsured families. You should not receive a bill using this testing option.

### **COVID-19 Community Testing Sites and Events**

All COVID-19 testing is free at a Minnesota Department of Health community testing event. We are always planning more community testing events across the state, working together with communities to make sure everyone can get tested.

- You won't need to show identification.
- Tests are free, and insurance is not required.

[Find Nasal Swab Community Testing Events](#)

[Find Saliva Community Testing Sites](#)

Students will be provided training on how to transition to the Distance Learning Model during this school week. More information will be provided by individual school sites in regards to information about Distance Learning schedules.

We recognize that there is no scenario in which we can select a learning model that meets the needs of everyone. Attempting to balance the educational needs of our students with the health and safety concerns has proven to be a difficult challenge for school districts across the state. We understand that this change can be difficult and we look forward to a time in which we all can return to school in-person everyday.

We thank you again for your understanding and partnership during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Darren Schuler  
Superintendent