

RTL QUESTIONS
7/13/2020 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

CHILD CARE

1. How will remote learning work for children in childcare centers with parents working? Administration has been in communication with two local childcare providers. The School District will work on this issue to ensure we are doing our best to reach ALL kids in our schools.
2. It is not the responsibility of daycare to educate NCSD students unless NCSD wants to pay that bill. An accredited teacher is also needed per state law. The Newton Community School District will be providing teachers with appropriate licensure to provide all educational opportunities for our students. This will be the case for all students whether they are in person learning or remote learning. The Iowa Department of Education has provided guidance and has required all school districts to provide assurances in several different areas in order to provide any remote learning. The Newton Community School District submitted the assurances prior to the deadline of July 1, 2020 and they were approved.
3. If we are sending kids to childcare on Monday we are exposing the childcare providers to an entirely different group of children than they are the rest of the week. This in turn exposes your staff to many more people. There are currently many different sources of the spread. There is currently significant information being used by state and national officials, which suggests the vast majority of young people are not getting the severe symptoms like adults, which is being used to guide the reopening of schools. There will be very concrete procedures put into place when there is a positive case which have been provided by the Department of Public Health. We will continue to seek their guidance and contact them each time there is a question to ensure we are following recommended procedures.
4. Are there enough childcare opportunities for all of the children that will need care? Each year there are different days throughout the school calendar (both planned and unplanned) which see the need for daycare greatly increased. This would be the case this year with Mondays. We are working to have more information on this over the next week so we can provide some data with our plan and help make certain we are supporting student learning at all remote locations.

MEDICAL GUIDANCE

5. I wanted to ask the Board if they consider that there are sufficient resources to address returning to school, while following the recommendations suggested by the CDC. The expenditures from school district accounts will be higher than times before COVID-19. This is a result of extra cleaning and disinfecting supplies, masks and other items used to help reduce health risks, and increased costs in supplies due to supply and demand. We are following the guidelines recommended by the Department of Education and public health as we plan and implement.

6. Who exactly is the representative from Jasper County Public Health Dept, what position do they hold? [Becky Pryor is the administrator for Jasper County Public Health. We have utilized her guidance. We have also had a county wide meeting for school officials with Jasper County Public Health to discuss returning to school.](#)
7. Dr. Guarin, a well-known family physician in Newton, has spoken openly about not having kids back into the buildings. What does the school board say to professionals like Dr. Guarin, about choosing to go ahead with in-person learning? [The Newton Community School District continues to receive guidance from local, state, and federal agencies pertaining to our operations for both students and staff. The formal announcement from the Governor was the formal declaration which reinforced the earlier directives from the Department of Education which stated we will return to school. Once that became the expectation we have been in communication with Jasper County Public Health to make sure we are putting safety and well being as a very high priority.](#)

CLASSROOM SETUP

8. The CDC recommends 6 foot distance between desks, how will that be possible with full classes? [Social Distancing is not something which is completely possible in a school setting. The focus has been on mitigation and prevention while putting different policies and practices into effect to minimize the flow of outside traffic into the schools.](#)
9. What social distancing practices will be implemented in classrooms? [We do not yet know what all of the practices will be in the classrooms. We are looking at seating arrangements, any type of necessary barriers where necessary, and regular cleaning protocols. We will be continuing to seek ways to reduce the amount of close proximity in our classrooms and avoid all physical contact.](#)
10. Has plexiglass been considered in the classroom for younger children? [Yes. We have set a priority list after looking at all areas of our schools. Seating arrangements will be set so there is no face to face seating in the classrooms without a form of a barrier. Tables in rooms does not allow for all students to face the same direction and will be placed as one of our highest priorities.](#)

FACE COVERINGS

11. Would the Board consider making mask-wearing mandatory for students to decrease risks to teachers and classmates? [At the last school board meeting, it was approved by the Newton School Board for all people in our buildings to wear protective face coverings. Outside the buildings it is recommended but not required. This includes all students, teachers, staff, and anyone who enters the buildings for other purposes. It also includes anyone riding on school transportation.](#)
 - a. If no, would they consider making class assignments that consolidate those students who **are** willing to wear masks, so that they can benefit from the safety measures they are extending to their peers? (i.e., put all masked students together, put non-masked students together).
12. Is scientific evidence and true numbers being taken into account when it comes to requiring masks during the school year? [The difficult part of developing a plan is the](#)

varying sources of information which are published. There are statistics showing benefits on both sides of the mask issue. It was the belief of the Newton Community School District to err on the side of requiring protective face coverings to minimize the spread in an environment which does not have the same possibilities for social distancing as many other areas.

13. How will a parent file an exemption for face coverings? The official process is not available yet. There will be a procedure for parents who wish to ask for a waiver from wearing protective face coverings based on health, religion, or other reasonings which would be left to administration to decide upon.
14. Has the district looked into clear face masks for teachers, especially in elementary? I support the decision to wear one. Missouri offered a grant to purchase them for all of their schools. They have discounts when ordered in bulk and would be a great option especially for elementary. The School District will be providing all students with masks. The teachers and staff will be provided with both masks and clear face shields. There is definite educational value to being able to see a teachers face and mouth as they are teaching the students.
15. How will you rectify the speech problems that will be the result of wearing masks everyday? At this point, we realize there will be some areas made difficult with the requirements of masks. Masks are not going to be a permanent fixture in our classrooms and we will monitor the progress of our students as we always have and will make any accommodations necessary to keep them on track.
16. Will they be wearing masks during PE and recess? The concern is overheating. We do not have the exact guidelines yet. We do know masks will not be required outdoors. The rest of the plan will be communicated once it is developed.
17. From a medical standpoint, the school does understand the face shields do not replace face masks?? They serve two different purposes. While they both have different benefits, there are certain benefits to have a clear face shield or possibly even a mask with a clear plastic insert which allows students to see the teacher's mouth move for pronunciation.
18. Will students be able to take masks off while seated at their desks if they are safely spaced? At this point the guidelines will be indoors they are required and outdoors they are recommended.
19. Just to clarify, Masks will be required in all schools the entire time they are in the building? What about lunch? Yet they are required at all times inside with the exception of lunch.
20. Do students sitting in the class learning at their desk need to have a mask? At this point in time they are required at all times inside.
21. What happens with students who won't keep masks on (kindergarten kids) are they going to be forced to go to remote learning as well? That is the approved plan at this time.
22. How can you ensure that a kindergarten teacher will give quality lessons when he/she is worried about keeping masks on kids. It seems like it would be a never ending battle to me? There are several different instances in school of teachers being tasked with

establishing routines and habits. This will be one of those instances. We are working on communication to parents about the new requirement and will teach our students upon return.

23. Some schools require face masks but they will not be worn in classrooms. Are there times when facemask breaks will be taken or will they be mandatory from start to end of school for elementary students? It has been discussed. At this time the rule is masks are required at all times inside with the exception of lunch time.
24. How is it safer for children to wear masks when they will be touching their faces all day? There will be education for our students on "mask etiquette." We will continue to practice and reinforce appropriate behaviors with masks.
25. If provided with the proper PPE for teachers how are teachers at risk? The emphasis is on the safety and well being of all people in our buildings.

REMOTE LEARNING DAY

26. Our school district is putting a plan in place to open because of requirements by the department of education; Can the district refuse to open and what are the consequences of that decision? Would the board consider these consequences to preserve children and faculty safety? School districts are required to open and have in person learning for a minimum of 50% of the time. The Iowa Governor announced this officially on Friday, July 17, 2020. This requirement allows for schools to have parents opt to keep their students at home on a remote learning model. To maintain our status as an accredited school and receive funding for operation schools must meet the standards set by the state requirements.
27. How will success or failure of the 4 day week be evaluated? There will be a regular review of our practices. The first review will begin immediately but will be formally evaluated and analyzed approximately 6 weeks into the school year. Any necessary changes would take place at the start of the second quarter unless the situation called for a more immediate alteration.
 - a. If children are "remote learning" how will that count as a full day of school if they are not getting a full day of instruction from a teacher? There is no exact answer to this question yet. The guidance document which came out immediately following the Governor's announcement is still being reviewed and we will match our practices up with those requirements.
28. Curious, what does a Zoom day look like? I believe parents and taxpayers deserve transparency. How will the district account for the learning minutes? This is still being developed. There will be a schedule. We do not know the specifics yet. There will be more information on this next week and will also be communicated out to parents and the community through a website being set up with complete information on the return to learn plan.
29. If a student chooses remote learning to start, when are they able to change their mind to attend school in person? The process for transitioning from one method to another has not been determined yet.

30. Does the benefit of having a 4-day school week truly outweigh the consequences? The true benefit we are seeking in a four day week is not safety. Contact with other people is only reduced by 20% during the shortened week. We are pursuing the four day week for the purpose of making sure we provide the highest quality learning experience possible. There will also be regular interaction with our students using a remote model on the fifth day. This will ensure a stronger sense of routine in that type of learning in the event we close a classroom, a building, or the district.
31. Who does the 4-day school week actually benefit? The benefits will be to all students and teachers. We will have the ability to support our teachers in their learning and practices to be well-equipped to teach remotely.
32. How much will a Zoom day cost for the District? We do have many tools other than Zoom. We will be utilizing Seesaw, Google Classroom, and Schoology. These tools are beneficial even when not in a remote setting. The High School has used Schoology in the past and the Middle School is adding it on.
 - a. IT is a subscription service...even to schools.
33. How much will it cost the District to make certain ALL students visa vise FERPA are fully connected and are appropriately equipped? I understand Fort Dodge is looking at \$650,000 annual just to provide broadband. That doesn't include equipment. We do not have the total budget put together yet for our District. There are many things which are yet to be worked out.
34. When referring to remote learning, does that mean that the student would be participating with the teacher in class with the other students (i.e. via zoom), or would it be a special curriculum independent of what the other students are doing? The curriculum will be the same for all students. The delivery method will vary. Remote learning is not effective when it is just practiced as a student watching a teacher and classroom from a remote setting. We will work to engage all students in all learning.
35. If going to remote learning, what is the plan for those students without access to computers and internet service? There is a plan already in place for getting device access to the students. It will not be ready for roll out on the first day of school because our new devices will not be received in the district yet. We have a number of families who do not have access to the internet and we are going to be addressing that in future.
36. How will that parent hold the district accountable for learning, if they choose to enroll virtually. Are we prepared for an exodus to online learning schools who know how to do it better than we do? Last year there were three schools who were approved to conduct online learning as their sole source of education. It is my understanding there are two additional schools who were approved this year. We have teachers who have been engaged in learning to be an online teacher. We will continue to support our teachers in this area. We will also be evaluating our implementation of the return to learn plan and will be looking at everything with a critical eye to ensure we are providing valuable learning experiences for all of our students.
37. What exactly does "remote learning" look like? Will it be teacher led? It will be teacher led. We do not have the specific details of teh remote model yet. It will be part of our

plan presented to the School Board at the next meeting and communicated out to the public.

38. Will the audio on the remote learning be better than this? I am hopeful we will have a quality experience but also realize there will be technical issues we have to address.
39. What are the metrics that will be used to determine whether you need to shift to a fully remote scenario for a period of time? We will follow the guidelines given to us by the Public Health Department. If there is a student or staff member who has tested positive there will be a mandatory 14 day quarantine period. The same quarantine period will also be in place for everyone with exposure per the guidelines from public health. We are told that if a person is exposed for more than 15 minutes inside a radius of 6 feet they will also have to be quarantined. So if there is a positive case in a classroom, we would be forced to close that classroom and have the people in it quarantined for 14 days. If the guidelines change at the state level, we would change our practices to meet the new guidelines. We will also be in regular contact with public health when there is a positive case or exposure to make certain we are following the guidelines correctly.
40. If a family decided to start as remote learning because of the high number of positive cases, can we decide to do in person learning at any time -- when the positive case numbers come down? The answer to this question has not yet been determined. There will be more information on this shortly.
 - a. If we start fully remote, at what point can we re-evaluate for our child and rejoin classes if possible
 - b. How often will parents be given the option to switch from the fully remote option to the 4 day/week option and vice versa?
41. What are the ramifications for student's mental health completing remote learning? This is a very good question. One of the subcommittees has been working on the emotional health of our students and staff. It is a requirement from the state that we address this topic.
42. What are the ramifications for increased screen time? Not all remote learning will be screen time. Technology will be a significant tool to use to conduct remote learning but will not be the only method.
43. Has it been discussed If parents can choose to send kids part of the week and virtually learn the rest of the week? There is no answer to this yet.
44. Will students be required to sign into the computer 8-3 if fully remote?
 - a. For the remote learning day will there be set times the students have to log on for class? The exact schedule will be released shortly. There will most likely not be a "regular" school day involved in the remote learning model. Recommendations from the state and review of what other schools are planning have been used as resources and we want to make sure we are engaging our students without tying them to a computer screen all day with the emphasis being solely on the minutes.
45. Will there be recorded lessons from teachers that kids can watch any time so that parents who work during the day are able to assist kids at home? There will most likely be a process similar to that suggestion in our plan. The exact details have to be worked out still.

CORONAVIRUS EXPOSURE/CALENDAR/SCHOOL CLOSURE

46. What is the threshold of positive cases before a classroom/school/or entire district would shut down? How far out does that threshold go? Students/faculty? Family members in their home? Any exposure? We will follow the guidelines given to us by the Public Health Department. If there is a student or staff member who has tested positive there will be a mandatory 14 day quarantine period. The same quarantine period will also be in place for everyone with exposure per the guidelines from public health. We are told that if a person is exposed for more than 15 minutes inside a radius of 6 feet they will also have to be quarantined. So if there is a positive case in a classroom, we would be forced to close that classroom and have the people in it quarantined for 14 days. If the guidelines change at the state level, we would change our practices to meet the new guidelines. We will also be in regular contact with public health when there is a positive case or exposure to make certain we are following the guidelines correctly.
47. What data points are going to be used to determine to change the calendar or the learning day? We will continue to use the guidelines from the Department of Education. This is mandatory. For the learning day we have been looking at what the recommendations are and will be routinely evaluating our effectiveness in reaching our learners.
48. Can we lock down a criteria for "Jasper county cases" or rate of contraction in order to go full remote, or inform parents of the criteria before we are forced to decide whether we enroll in class? We will continue to work closely with county and state officials to handle all COVID related cases and issues.
49. What will quarantines look like if there is an exposure at a school while in-class? Quarantine will lead to remote learning. If students and staff are forced to quarantine we will immediately shift to remote learning in those areas. We will look at classrooms first, then buildings, and finally district.
50. Who makes the decision to shut down the school? What are the guidelines? Are you just playing it by ear? There has been a board policy which passed through first reading which addresses this. The superintendent and school board have been given the authority by the state. We will follow all guidelines from Public Health and the Department of Education.

BACK TO SCHOOL

51. Will back to school nights still happen? These events are still being planned. They will not look exactly as they have in the past. There will be information coming out soon about such events.

SUBSTITUTES

52. How will we keep our substitutes safe if they come in when we are at home sick? Substitutes will be provided all of the same supplies and training as staff. The governor did also provide some allowances to help provide a larger substitute pool.

PERSONNEL

53. How will remote learning Monday's work for Educational Associates? This has not yet been determined. There may be different duties assigned to them during the Monday remote time. It is also a possibility these days will not be a "contract" day during the modified school calendar. This is not the first choice because it could mean an agreement with fewer days and that would impact salary.
54. What will happen with Educational Associates if many parents keep IEP kiddos home? We are in the process of determining who will be returning to school. The next step will be to assign staff to different areas to make sure the needs of the IEPs are met. This continues to be worked on and may not be resolved for a few weeks yet because we do not know which students are returning at this point.
55. How long will staff need to stay home if they feel sick? The recommendations from 211 and from the Department of Public Health will be followed.
56. If we do have to stay home, or test positive and need to be out for 2 weeks, does that use our sick days? At this point, there are a limited number of days per staff member which can be used for COVID related situations. It is currently two weeks. Once that has been used, personal sick days would have to be used.
57. Does it devalue a teachers degree that takes years to get when you move to remote learning and learn the program as you go? I believe this is similar to what has happened each time there have been different initiatives put in place. Teachers are constantly learning and growing. The District is providing time, support, and resources to help our teachers grow in the area of remote learning.

LUNCH/CAFETERIA

58. How will lunch rooms and recess be handled in regards to social distancing? These details are still be worked out.

PRESCHOOL

59. Is preschool going to continue as planned? Preschool will still be continuing. The details of preschool will be in line with the same guidelines as the other grades. This will be addressed in our return to learn plan and communicated out.

MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL

60. How will middle school and high school classes be handled when students move between several classes everyday and have several different electives making it impossible to be in one room all day? This is definitely a more difficult situation than at the elementary setting. It would potentially mean quarantine on a larger scale.
61. Will students have access to lockers in middle school/high school? No final decision has been made yet. It is a strong possibility that lockers will not be used this year.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION/CROSSING GUARDS

62. The 1/2 mile was created to cover hardship to families. So far, I do not hear family friendly discussions. This has definitely been a difficult decision. The proximity on school buses is much different than in the classrooms when all students are on the buses. This situation is one of the items on the list to be evaluated with our plan. The data on the impact will be shared with the school board by the end of the first quarter and it will be determined if the impact is too strong for us to continue with the new policy.
63. Two miles is a ridiculous amount to expect kids to walk to school if they do not have transportation from their parents. How will you address the 800 kids who will no longer receive transportation? At this point, we will follow the policy which was changed in June. We will evaluate it again by the end of the first quarter and determine if the costs are too great for us to continue with the new guidelines. It is fully understood this provides a hardship. I am not at all happy about that. We are forced to do many different things at this time to move forward with opening our school.
64. Will there be people assisting kids going to middle school who have to cross 1st Ave with the new transportation guidelines? We will continue to meet on many different topics. Transportation is one of those. We are working to identify areas where safety is a concern with students getting to school. There is a crossing guard located at the corner of 1st Avenue and East 23rd Street. There will be more details coming on this.
65. If students are eligible to ride the bus but decide to transport can they change this election if situations change? Yes. Students do not lose their eligibility to ride a bus. It is based solely on distance from the attendance center.

VOLUNTEERS

66. Will PTA and other volunteers be allowed in the buildings? The exact details have not been worked out yet. It is likely that we will limit the number of volunteers or visitors into our buildings while the pandemic is still happening.