



Marshfield Public Schools

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Dear MPSD Families & Staff,

Good evening. I hope this finds you healthy and well. As yesterday's decision to move to full remote learning was rather abrupt and caught many of you off-guard, I wanted to take a second to address a few questions or concerns that have been shared with various district stakeholders.

1. Why the late call?

A very appropriate question and an issue that I fully understand. The simple answer is that we had every intention of opening up today with Cohort A in person and our Cohort B students working asynchronously at home. We knew there were a number of cases from earlier in the break, but we were prepared to open up with those numbers.

Unfortunately, we got word late Sunday afternoon of 14 new positive Covid-19 cases since New Year's Eve. This brought our total of positive Covid-19 cases to 32 students and/or staff over a week. In addition, we knew that we were looking at close to 3 dozen staff who were going to be out, either in isolation for being positive or quarantined as a close contact of someone who was Covid positive. A few more were going to be out so they could be tested due to having Covid symptoms.. If the numbers were this high earlier in the week, we would have made a call much sooner.

Once the determination was made to move to remote learning, we worked to get the communication out to families and staff and that took some time. Once complete, it was 8 PM and we were submitting the email into blackboard connect for delivery.

I recognize the inconvenience the late call had on students, their families and our staff and again, if we could have sent this note out earlier, we would have done so.

2. Who was consulted on this decision?

Our Nurse Director, Jane Landry, is in communication with the Nurse Leader at the Marshfield Board of Health and they communicate with us on the new cases in the district as they arise. The two also discuss best steps to take based on the information that is provided. When aware that we were looking to move in this direction, the Chair of the School Committee was notified and he shared this information with the other members.

In addition, we were in direct contact with the Chair of the Board of Health, as well as the District's School Physician. And before any decision was made to go remote, we consulted with representatives at the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. While everyone was aware of the concerns going forward in remote, it was agreed that it was the most appropriate decision, at this time, based on the numbers presented to us.

3. The cases are, for the most part, not being transmitted in school. Why keep everyone out?

That is correct. The vast majority of cases have not been seen to originate through in-school transmission. Nonetheless, in this case, we had a large number of cases across the district, in a very short period of time. Our total in less than three days was close to double what a neighboring district has had since the school year began. There was serious concern by all involved that bringing students and staff back together raised the possibility of more cases spreading in all schools and impacting not only our students and staff, but their families as well. As a district we are taking the steps needed to stop spread. With the close contact tracking that takes place with every new case in school, we ran the risk of having even more students and staff out of school.

4. Some schools have had more cases than others. Why keep all of the schools out on remote?

Part of this is answered in the previous question. The numbers presented through the Board of Health show an impact across all seven schools. Some numbers are larger than others, but at the end of the day, the spike over the past two weeks has impacted each of our seven schools and has not only affected students but our staff as well.

In addition, the Town of Marshfield itself has seen a significant increase over the last two weeks and the numbers have steadily grown across our community since Thanksgiving. Since December 10th, the town has also been deemed a "high risk" zone by the DPH due to the number of new cases of Covid-19, per 100,000 residents. And as of this afternoon, we have just been made aware of six more positive cases among students and staff. This brings our district total up to 131 cases.

With the expectation from our health officials that the numbers of positive cases across the community will continue to increase, we felt it was in the best interest of our stakeholders to not bring them together during this time and run the risk of even greater increases in school and across the town.

5. When will the two cohorts (A & B) begin working together in the full remote schedule?

Cohorts A & B will follow the full remote schedule together starting on Wednesday, January 6 and will continue to do so until the remote period ends (no later than January 15).

Only cohort A began with the full remote schedule (including "Zooming" in their lessons) today. The reason behind this was due to the fact that Cohort B would be typically working on their asynchronous schedule today and tomorrow and they would not be covering the same materials as their peers in Cohort A. Once this cycle ends (Tuesday, January 5), the teachers will bring both cohorts together and follow their respective remote schedules.

There are some teachers who have tried to bring students in both cohorts together, informally, for at least a short period of time today. While not mandatory, if it is possible to coordinate, this is a welcomed addition to the schedule. However, we realize that many teachers already had planned and released their content, and many families already had their plans in place.

6. When do students have to report to their remote class?

The model schedules for remote learning at all levels (PreK, K-5 & 6-12) can be found on the district's website. Here's a [LINK](#) to those schedules.

At the **secondary levels (grades 6-12)**, students will follow their typical class schedule of four classes on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday at the following times:

A or E Period 8:15 - 9:39 AM

B or F Period 9:45 - 11:09 AM

C or G Period 11:15 AM - 12:39 PM

D or H Period 12:45 - 2:02 PM

Each class is 84 minutes long. Students will Zoom (or Google Meet) with their teachers for a minimum of 42 minutes per period, per day. Attendance will be taken at this time. They will then work independently for the second half of class, and will be able to check back in with their teachers, as needed and/or at the end of the class.

Students in **grades K-5** will have a minimum of four points during the day where they will be in live contact (Zoom or Google Meet) with their teacher. This could consist of a morning meeting, a math lesson, an ELA lesson, and one other point during the school day. Each period between those live sessions will have students working independently on content. Time will be built in for breaks and lunch.

Elementary teachers will follow a schedule, based on the model linked above as well as their current in-person schedule, that best meets the needs of their students and will communicate that to their students.

While remote today, the Preschool Programs at the MES & DWS will be back in-person effective tomorrow, January 5.

7. Are sports postponed during this period of Remote Learning?

Yes. With the significant increase in the number of positive Covid cases across the district and the community we are not only looking to limit the spread of positive Covid-19 cases in our classrooms, we are also looking to do the same in the athletic arena.

Unfortunately, we have already seen a number of Patriot League schools have to postpone certain teams due to outbreaks of Covid-19. We do not want to see the same thing occur here, while numbers continue to rise and we are in our remote learning model.

(As of the writing of this update, we were just informed of a positive case impacting one of our teams, causing that group of students and staff to isolate and/or quarantine.)

8. Will students w/ Significant & Complex Needs report for in-person instruction?

For students who currently attend school five days a week, in-person learning will resume tomorrow, January 5th.

9. What is the plan for “High Needs” Students?

Elementary: Students enrolled in 4-Day Programs (.5 or more of the school day with a special education teacher and/or related service provider) will access their education remotely at least through this Wednesday (1/6/21). On Wednesday, each school will reevaluate its ability to provide meaningful in-person services safely. Families should expect notification by the end of the school day on Wednesday 1/6/21 regarding the learning format students in the “High Needs” subgroup will follow on Thursday and Friday.

Secondary: The majority of students currently receiving special education services 4-days per week at FBMS and MHS will remain in a remote learning model for the next two weeks.

10. Will school meals be provided?

Yes. Our Food Service Department is working with each school to schedule a pickup period for those families who choose to receive school breakfast & lunch packages.

The schedule for these pickups will be communicated out to each school by their Principal and/or the Food Service Department.

11. Does this change to full remote learning impact the Alternative Remote Programs?

No. The changes to the new remote schedule only pertain to those students who have been following the hybrid model of learning.

Students who have been fully remote throughout the year will continue to follow their original schedule.

I hope this information is helpful. While none of us want to see our students away from the classroom, it is what has been deemed the most appropriate format to meet the health and safety needs of our students and staff at this time. If you have any questions pertaining to your child’s schedule, please do not hesitate to be in contact with your child’s teacher or building principal.

Over the past month, the district has been working to make improvements and adjustments to our hybrid learning model based on feedback from our stakeholders and which will also address new regulations from DESE. We have also been looking at what steps will need to be taken to get back to full in-person instruction. Recommendations on increasing structured (live) learning time will be presented to the School Committee tomorrow night and will go into effect January 19.

While this move to remote is not ideal, we hope it is only for a short period of time and we are confident it will not get in the way of the work that has been ongoing.

Thank you again for your patience and understanding. Please be well and make sure that we keep promoting the steps needed to help combat the Covid-19 virus: Safe social distancing. Washing hands frequently. And, most importantly, please wear a mask.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Granatino

Superintendent