DATE: September 9, 2020
TO: Board of Education
FROM: Kate LaPlaunt, Assistant Superintendent
SUBJECT: Return to School Plan - Elementary School Recommendation

Introduction

As a continuation of the successful phasing-in of students, we desire that all Elementary students return for in-person learning when the local COVID-19 Conditions allow for this to be done safely. With that in mind, this recommendation is made with the assumption that the Fairbank North Star Borough School District is in a Yellow or Green operational zone. All Elementary Schools will respond to Red Zone conditions according to the plans and guidelines previously designed.

Possible Start Date

Our recommendation is to bring back students as quickly as is reasonably possible following approval to do so by the FNSBSD School Board. Understanding this could happen as early as the September 15 School Board Meeting we estimate a possible start date of October 5, 2020.

The time between a School Board decision and the effective start date allows for many details including shoring up transportation routes and securing drivers, working with Human Resource on the process of bringing back staff who are currently on Telework Agreements, and communicating clearly and carefully to families so they know what to expect as their child(ren) return(s) to in-person schooling.
Elementary School Schedules

This sample Elementary School schedule is based on an 8:10 AM start time for students, with a 5.0 hour student contact day. Please see the exact start and end times for each elementary school listed below.

[Sample Elementary Schedule table]

https://www.k12northstar.org/Page/9938

- Teacher day is from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30pm
- Student day is from 8:10a.m. - 1:10pm

School Start and End Times

Due to DEED Smart Start health and safety requirements, school start and end times had to be adjusted for the 2020-21 academic year. These start and end times will remain consistent throughout the school year, regardless of whether school is in-person or remote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>START - END Time</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:10AM-1:10PM</td>
<td>Anne Wien</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denali Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joy K-8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ticasuk Brown Elementary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two Rivers K-8</td>
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<td>Salcha Elementary</td>
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</table>
North Pole Elementary
Midnight Sun Elementary
University Park Elementary
Pearl Creek Elementary
Weller Elementary
Woodriver

8:55AM-1:55PM Anderson Elementary

9:05AM - 2:05PM Crawford Elementary

9:30AM-2:30PM Arctic Light K-8
Ladd K-8
Hunter Elementary
Nordale Elementary

Student Day

The greatest change to the student experience will be the smaller Learning Pods and less mixing between groups. Students will remain with their designated Learning Pod for the majority of their day, and teachers and staff will move between limited numbers of pods to deliver in-person instruction. While core instruction will be designed and mostly delivered by the teacher of record, additional staff will facilitate learning and provide supervision and educational support to students. This is to allow increased groups necessary to meet social distancing guidelines.

Although in-person, some instruction may also continue through remote learning methods. This works especially well for some subjects and actually may increase the number of students who can participate. Continuing with remote learning methods also benefits students who are home awaiting a Covid Test, for quarantine to end, or anytime a school is moved to the Red Zone.

Some things may happen differently but will still be part of every student day:

- **Breakfast and Lunch**
  - Students will eat in classrooms, practicing hygiene, cleaning, and social distancing.

- **Core instruction to be delivered by the teacher of record.**
  - Core instruction includes: Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
  - Additional independent work time may be monitored by staff working as Student Learning Mentors

- **Required Services and Support**
  - Special attention will be given to not mix between cohorts.
Students may participate in small group work with peers from the same cohort.

- Outside physical activity learning breaks will be managed at a school level, with attention to cohorts.
- Music, Physical Education, Library, and Art will be a regular part of the student week.

Learning Pods and Cohorts

There are several known, highly effective strategies that help reduce the spread of COVID-19. These continue to be wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing of 6 feet or more, washing hands and surfaces frequently, and minimizing social interactions and group size. Our return plan addresses all of these, first with the requirement of all staff and students to wear masks, then by strictly adhering to 6 feet spacing between students in the learning environment, and finally, by maintaining smaller learning pods and cohorts. Frequent hand washing and cleaning of shared items and high-touch surfaces are also part of every school and class plan.

For the purpose of elementary schools, here are the approved guidelines on how to form and maintain learning pods and cohorts.

PODS

- A Learning Pod is the small group of students who share a classroom space, eat lunch together, and spend the majority of their time at school together.
- The size of the Learning Pod is determined by the space available.
  - An average elementary classroom allows for about 16 - 18 students with social distancing of 6 feet. Therefore, an average Learning Pod size will have about 16 students.
- Students belong to the same Learning Pod every day, all day.

COHORT

- A cohort can be made up of several Learning Pods from the same general grade band. For example, three, 2nd-grade Learning Pods can form a 2nd Grade Cohort.
  - 2nd Grade Cohort - The Space Explorers! (47 students)
    - The Jupiter Pod - 15 students
    - The Mars Pod - 16 students
    - The Saturn Pod - 16 students
- Cohorts can go outside together, walk in the hall to get lunch and mix within the cohort for special education supports, ELP, Speech & Language, etc.
- Cohorts should not mix to eat breakfast or lunch.

With this understanding in place, schools can arrange the day so that no cohort of students mix and only Learning Pods from the same cohort interact with each other.