

Dear Parents,

I know the upcoming school year has been on everyone's mind, especially since we ended the 2019-2020 school year using distance learning. This was not ideal for anyone, but our staff, students, and parents did a great job doing what they needed to do in order to make the best of a bad situation. Tracy Area Public Schools will offer In-Person Learning for all students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6, these students will be in school at Tracy Area Elementary School all day every day, and we will offer a hybrid model for students in grades 7-12. Students in grades 7-12 will also be in school all day every day but grades 7, 8, and 9 may be at an alternate location with grades 10, 11, and 12 in the Tracy Area High School Building.

The Tracy Area School District is in need of your responses to some questions regarding your desires for a return to learning for the 2020-2021 school year. The district needs YOUR input for your child's -- education, transportation, and internet access. All information you provide will assist the district in finalizing return to school plans.

In filling out the survey, you will need to provide information for each of your children. YOU WILL NEED TO GO BACK TO YOUR EMAIL LINK TO FILL OUT A SURVEY FOR EACH OF YOUR CHILDREN. Thank you for your participation as we plan for the fall. If you do not respond to the survey, someone from TAPS will be contacting you for your responses.

In July, Governor Walz directed all school districts to develop three educational plans using three different scenarios for the upcoming school year. The three scenarios of learning are:

**In-Person learning:** In this scenario schools will create as much space between students and teachers as feasible during the day, but will not be held to strictly enforcing six feet of social distancing during primary instruction time in the classroom

**Hybrid Learning with strict social distancing requirements and capacity limits:** In this planning scenario, schools must limit the overall number of people in school facilities and on transportation vehicles to 50% maximum occupancy. Sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people must occur at all times.

**Distance Learning:** This scenario may be implemented if local, regional, or statewide COVID-19 metrics worsen significantly enough to require the suspension of in-person learning. Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s).

**Virtual Academy Option:**

This scenario may be implemented for those parents with great concern for their students to return to school in any in-person educational format. We have identified an educational partner "Educere" to provide ready-made digital content for teaching and learning of our basic district core classes. Parents who choose this option will be required to commit to this choice for the entire semester. This option is **not taught with TAPS teachers**, but students who chose this option will be TAPS students and can participate in all TAPS activities.

To determine which model we will use to start the school year the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will use data from counties to determine a base learning model for public schools. Tracy Area Public Schools in consultation with public health, will determine a learning model to begin the school year and communicate that decisions with their school community.

In order to determine the base learning model, TAPS will be advised of the bi-weekly case rate (over 14 days) in Lyon County. These data are the number of cases by county of residence in Minnesota over 14 days per 10,000 people by date of specimen collection (when a person was tested).

<b>Number of cases per 10,000 over 14 days, by county of residence</b>	<b>Learning Model</b>
<b>0-9</b>	<b>In-Person Learning for all students</b>
<b>10-19</b>	<b>In-Person learning for elementary students; hybrid learning for secondary students.</b>
<b>20-29</b>	<b>Hybrid Learning for all students</b>
<b>30-49</b>	<b>Hybrid learning for elementary students; distance learning for secondary students</b>
<b>50+</b>	<b>Distance Learning for all students</b>

As of August 1, 2020 Lyon County was in the 10-20 with 10.4 cases per 10,000 over 14 days. This would put TAPS at In-person learning for elementary students and hybrid learning for secondary students.

Our priorities for our students are safety, adaptability, and equity. Our number one priority is always the safety of our students and staff. We will do whatever we need to do to keep everyone safe. However, in any learning scenario we cannot guarantee that people will not contract COVID 19. We must also be ready to adapt to changes in learning models as COVID cases rise or fall in our area. This could mean going from In-Person to Hybrid to Distance learning at a moment's notice. We must also be equitable. TAPS will educate all children equally and to the best of our ability regardless of their race, gender, class, and disability. All children will receive a first class education no matter the learning model.

Tuesday, August 4 we met with several stakeholders and discussed our plan and talked about ways to make it better. Monday, August 10, the TAPS board met and discussed all the learning models and came up with plan to start the school year. The plan to start the school year will be (In-person Learning for grades pre-Kindergarten through grade 6 and Hybrid for grades 7-12).

- In-Person Learning for Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6 will have these students in the elementary school all day every day wearing masks creating as much space between students and teachers as feasible during the day, but will not be held to strictly enforcing six feet of social distancing during primary instruction time in the classroom.

- Hybrid Learning for grades 7-12 will limit the overall number of people in school facilities and on transportation vehicles to 50% maximum occupancy. Sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people must occur at all times.
- In order to meet these guidelines students in grades 7, 8, & 9 will likely be off campus at the VMC/Library Basement/Other Area to be determined, but will meet all day every day.
- Students in grades 10, 11, and 12 will be on campus at TAHS all day every day but their schedule and class locations will be altered in order to meet both social distancing and capacity limit guidelines.
- Choir and Band for grades 7-12 may be at an alternate location.
- The exact plan for grades 7-12 is currently being revised and solidified under this hybrid model. This will be coming out soon from Principal Vondracek.

However, as I said earlier we must be ready to adapt to other learning models depending on how the levels of COVID in our area.

Busing will also be a challenge since we need to social distance and keep capacity limits on the bus under 50% because we are still in the hybrid model for grades 7-12. Therefore, we will have an out of Tracy route that will drop off students first followed by an in Tracy route that will drop off students second. This will mean students will arrive at different times, but instruction will not start until all students are in the class together and instruction will end when the first group leaves. If parents are able to transport their children to and from school this would help us decrease our bus numbers and help create quicker routes. I will be sending out a survey asking which parents can transport their children.

I understand this is a lot of information to think about as we continue to prepare for the upcoming school year. Busing, schedules, and even some locations for grades 7, 8 & 9 may look different. However, TAPS is doing everything possible to keep everything as normal as we can bringing our kids to school every day for as long as well can while still following the Minnesota Department of Health guidelines to keep everyone safe. I appreciate your patience, flexibility, and support of all of us at TAPS as we prepare a plan to best serve our kids. Once a Panther, Always a Panther!