

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: March 22, 2021

To: Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.,
Superintendent

From: Building Principals
Building Assistant Principals

Subject: In-Person Opportunities for Fully Remote Students

BACKGROUND

Beginning in the fall of 2020, students in District 39 were given the option of returning to school for in-person learning (modified in-person model or hybrid model), or learning remotely in the enhanced fully remote program, staffed by a separate team of District 39 teachers. At the semester break, families were again given the opportunity to make a choice between programs, and across District 39, more than 90% of families opted to continue with the learning program that their child was enrolled in for the first semester. Based on feedback from families, they made the choice to enroll in remote learning for many reasons, including health and safety, reduction in exposure, consistency of instruction, flexibility and movement throughout the day, and opportunities to learn free of mitigation protocols such as mask wearing.

Based on enrollment numbers, a team of teachers at each grade level was created to deliver instruction and support the growth and development of all of the students learning remotely. They worked to build classroom communities, to find ways to connect students, and to provide consistent, robust instruction on a daily basis throughout the school year. Based on parent request and individual circumstances, a limited number of transfers have been made between the in-person and remote programs throughout the year.

As we enter into fourth quarter, we continue to prioritize the social-emotional well-being of D39 students, and the continued growth and development of the already strong classroom communities that have been built in both learning programs. Lower transmission and positivity rates across the state have brought about revised guidance from the IDPH and ISBE regarding in-person experiences, and the development of highly effective vaccines have allowed over 92% of District 39 staff to be fully vaccinated. With revised guidance and a commitment to maintaining the integrity of our remote learning programs, the recommendation was made to develop and plan events and activities for remote learners with the intent of offering them the opportunity to meet with classmates and teachers in person in a safe, face to face manner.

ELEMENTARY OPTIONS AND SURVEY

At the elementary level, the administrative team heard feedback from many families, and shared the desire to plan in-person experiences for remote learners to take place during fourth quarter. A survey was shared with all remote learning families the week of March 15, and input regarding locations for in-person opportunities, types of opportunities students would have interest in participating, and the level of interest students have in various activities was gathered.

When asked, *Which locations would you be willing to bring your child for in-person experiences?*
[select all that apply]:

- 189 participants (84%) would be interested in an outdoor experience at their child's home school
- 130 participants (58%) would be interested in an indoor experience at their child's home school
- 127 participants (56%) would be interested in an outdoor experience at any of our D39 schools
- 72 participants (32%) would be interested in an indoor experience at any of our D39 schools
- 120 participants (53%) would be interested in an outdoor experience at a Wilmette Park District facility
- 56 participants (25%) would be interested in an indoor experience at a Wilmette Park District facility
- 24 participants (10%) would not be able or willing to bring their child to any in-person locations
- There are additional anecdotal responses through the use of "Other" on the form that aim to clarify and add to individuals' responses to the question.

When asked, *What types of activities would your child be interested in participating in?:*

- 182 participants (81.3%) indicated their child had interest in community building activities
- 166 participants (74.1%) indicated their child had interest in reading and writing activities
- 160 participants (71.4%) indicated their child had interest in math activities
- 169 participants (75.4%) indicated their child had interest in science activities
- 156 participants (69.6%) indicated their child had interest in social studies activities
- 173 participants (77.2%) indicated their child had interest in fine arts activities
- 179 participants (79.9%) indicated their child had interest in movement activities
- 178 participants (79.5%) indicated their child had interest in end of the year celebrations
- 108 participants (48.2%) indicated their child had interest in before/after school activities
- 93 participants (41.5%) indicated their child had interest in PTA enrichment activities
- 15 participants (6.7%) indicated they are not interested in their child participating in in-person experiences.

When families were asked to rank their level of interest in the ways their child could participate with in person experiences:

- 125 participants selected "Small group interactions/instruction/activity of 1 hour or less" as their #1 or *most interested* option.
- 71 participants selected "Whole class interactions/instruction/activity of 1 hour or less" as their #1 or *most interested* option.
- 73 participants selected "Project-based activity" as their #1 or *most interested* option.
- 76 participants selected "Special events/activities at school (with class/grade level or school) as their #1 or *most interested* option.
- 66 participants selected "A half-day school visit" as their #1 or *most interested* option.

- 69 participants selected “A full-day school visit (including lunch) as their #1 or *most interested* option.
- 7 participants selected “I am not interested in in-person experiences at this time” as their #1 or *most interested* option.

Based on the information gathered, the administrative team will be putting together a plan to offer regular opportunities for remote students to come in for in-person experiences throughout the fourth quarter.

5-8 PARENT SURVEY

At the 5-8 level, while planning for increased in-person learning experiences, many students and families expressed interest in increased in-person opportunities for students learning remotely. While we are committed to maintaining the integrity of the fully remote program through the end of the semester for those who have enrolled in this program, we are also committed to creating increased opportunities for students learning remotely to connect in-person with their peers and teachers, free of a screen. A survey was shared with all remote learning families the week of March 15, and input regarding logistics and interest in various activities was gathered. 182 responses were gathered.

When asked, *What options would be of interest to your child, in addition to our current offerings for in-person opportunities? (Check all that apply):*

- 90 participants (48.4%) would be interested in a “social meet up at lunch”
- 89 participants (47.8%) would be interested in a “social meet up after school”
- 114 participants (61.3%) would be interested in an “in-person creative arts class”
- 122 participants (65.6%) would be interested in an “in-person PE class”
- 113 participants (60.8%) would be interested in “in-person team building/group games”
- 137 participants (73.7%) would be interested in an “in-person core class”
- 56 participants (30.1%) would be interested in an “in-person summer school opportunity”
- 104 participants (55.9%) would be interested in “small group instructional time”
- 69 participants (37.1%) would be interested in a “group community service project”
- 110 participants (59.1%) would be interested in a “field day”
- 51 participants (27.4%) would be interested in a “remote group art project”
- 133 participants (71.5%) would be interested in “end of the year activities/celebrations”
- 55 participants (29.6%) would be interested in a “remote book club”

When asked to *Please indicate the frequency your child would most likely attend these in-person opportunities.*

- 131 participants (68.2%) indicated interest in attending weekly or more frequent opportunities
- 56 participants (29.2%) indicated interest in attending two to four opportunities
- 31 participants (16.1%) indicated interest in attending one to two opportunities
- 14 participants (7.3%) indicated no interest in attending in-person opportunities

When asked *Which locations would you be willing to bring your child to for an in-person learning experience?*

- 136 participants (71.2%) indicated they would be interested in an experience indoors at the school
- 160 participants (83.8%) indicated they would be interested in an experience outdoors at the school
- 114 participants (59.7%) indicated they would be interested indoors on the 5-8 campus
- 150 participants (78.5%) indicated they would be interested outdoors on the 5-8 campus
- 86 participants (45%) indicated they would be interested in an experience indoors at a Park District facility
- 119 participants (62.3%) indicated they would be interested in an experience outdoors at a Park District facility
- 14 participants (7.3%) indicated they would not be able or willing to bring their child for an in-person learning experience

When asked about suggestions for in-person learning experiences, activities such as a day at Gillson, outdoor meet ups or nature hikes, clubs where remote and in-person learners could come together, and transition activities to get students familiar with the school building itself before the summer, were all suggested. Additionally, some families indicated a desire to move their child to fully in-person learning, while others shared that they were not comfortable participating in in-person activities at this time.

5-8 STUDENT SURVEY

Students on the 5-8 campus were also given a survey, similar to the survey shared with parents, to gauge their interest in opportunities to gather in person, and to rank the activities they would most be interested in attending. Input was gathered the week of March 15 from students as well, and participants equally represented all four grade levels of students.

When asked *What options are you interested in, in addition to our current offerings for in-person opportunities? (Check all that apply):*

- 27 participants (22.3%) would be interested in a “social meet up at lunch”
- 29 participants (24%) would be interested in a “social meet up after school”
- 30 participants (24.8%) would be interested in an “in-person creative arts class”
- 28 participants (23.1%) would be interested in an “in-person PE class”
- 41 participants (33.9%) would be interested in “in-person team building/group games”
- 32 participants (26.4%) would be interested in an “in-person core class”
- 18 participants (14.9%) would be interested in an “in-person summer school opportunity”
- 15 participants (12.4%) would be interested in “small group instructional time”
- 25 participants (20.7%) would be interested in a “group community service project”
- 75 participants (62%) would be interested in a “field day”
- 39 participants (32.2%) would be interested in a “remote group art project”
- 94 participants (77.7%) would be interested in “end of the year activities/celebrations”
- 10 participants (8.3%) would be interested in a “remote book club”

When asked about the likelihood of their participation in these activities, students indicated that most depended on the location of the activity, with a field day, and end of year activities receiving the most interest and likelihood of participation. Of the other activities, all of them had greater likelihood of non-participation than participation.

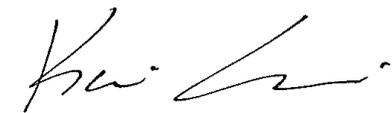
Students were asked for additional suggestions for in-person opportunities and those suggestions included an outdoor concert, a tour of the school and time in the school to get to know the building, homework help, and opportunities to just hang out and talk with friends. The majority of the interest from students fell in the areas of field day activities, team building games, and end of the year events. In the anecdotal comments, many students also indicated that they did not yet feel comfortable participating in in-person activities unless outdoors and socially distanced.

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A calendar of regular in-person activities and learning opportunities for remote learners at each grade level is being developed for the fourth quarter. The calendar of events will be based on the input gathered from students and families, and at the 5-8 level will offer increasing frequency in opportunities as the quarter progresses. The calendar of events will be shared after we return from spring break.

At the 5-8 campus, based on the feedback gathered from families regarding a desire to transfer from remote learning to in-person learning programs for the fourth quarter, and to account for families who may be uncomfortable with the increase in in-person learning and change in the guidelines in school, a transfer request form will be shared with all families for those desiring to request a change in placement for the fourth quarter. These requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and will be determined at the grade level based on the ability to accommodate the request and while maintaining safety protocols.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent