

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: November 16, 2020

To: Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent

From: Building Principals
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Subject: In-Person Learning Program Review Update

Background

Wilmette District 39's 2020-2021 Reopening plan, developed by the Fall Planning Committees, Advisory Task Force, and Administrative Council, outlines a continuum of instructional models (in-person, hybrid, full remote) that maximizes student learning and connection while adhering to all recommendations for student and staff safety provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Prior to Fall 2020 enrollment, families of elementary aged students were presented with two options: in-person and enhanced full remote for 1st semester. Families of students in grades 5-8 were presented with two options as well: hybrid (combination of in-person/remote) and enhanced full remote for 1st semester. As a result of family choice, there are 748 students participating in the enhanced remote learning program districtwide -- approximately 20% of district enrollment -- and 80% of total enrollment attend school in-person.

As a check in measure, a teacher survey was sent to all teachers of in-person learners asking for them to share their experiences after the first two weeks of in-person learning. The survey responses commented on what was going well with in-person learning, challenges that needed to be addressed, and what additional needs teachers had to instruct effectively. Elementary teachers shared that for the most part arrival procedures and student engagement were going well. They commented that the students were happy and excited to be in school, and it was great to see the smiles and connections being made. Grades 5-8 teachers indicated that students were regularly following safety protocols, were wearing masks, were attentive and engaged, and that the classroom setup was manageable. Their comments shared that students were eager to be at school, and that they were working hard on the safety protocols to ensure in-person learning could continue.

At the elementary level, the top challenges identified included bathroom protocols and schedules, consistent mask wearing, and students struggling to maintain a safe social distance in the classroom. Additionally, elementary teachers shared that lunch and recess procedures and supervision, socially distancing between teachers and students, and technology glitches were challenges in the first two weeks of in-person learning. At the 5-8 level, teachers identified students struggling to maintain safe social distance in the classroom and as they navigated the school building as a persistent challenge in the first two weeks. They also shared that they would like more opportunities to go outside and eat as well as options for lunch to engage students while they were to be quiet with their masks off.

Across the board very few needs were indicated by teachers to continue to effectively instruct, however at the elementary level there were requests for support in utilizing small grouping in a socially distant manner, and more problem solving around how to better engage students socially with unstructured (recess) breaks. At the 5-8 level teachers requested also more problem solving around building in more fun activities at lunch and recess. Teachers indicated it brought a sense of “normalcy” to have students in school, and while planning and instructing of routines in the first weeks of school was tiring, the welcomed opportunities to further problem solve and improve.

IN-PERSON LEARNING PROGRAM REVIEW

October marks two months of school and signals a time to conduct a program review of enhanced remote learning model: strengths, areas for improvement, student/family and teacher needs. A program review begins with collection of data and so District 39 administered surveys to teachers, parents, and students in the fully remote program to gauge the success of the program so far, and to identify areas for improvement as the program continues:

Grades 3-4:	Student In-Person Learning Survey
Grades 5-8:	Student In-Person Learning Survey
D39 Parent:	Parent In-Person Learning Survey
D39 Certified:	D39 In-Person Certified Survey
D39 Support Staff:	D39 In-Person Paraprofessional Survey

The Family/Parent Survey received 2,010 responses (parents were asked to fill out a survey for each child enrolled), 589 elementary students (grade 3 and 4 were surveyed), and 1,114 students in grades 5-8. 258 in-person teachers and 85 paraprofessionals participated and provided responses on their needs survey.

PARENT AND STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

A summary of the survey results are presented in the tables below. The parent and student surveys were designed to have corresponding questions with the only difference being the wording to appeal to the respective audiences. Immediately following the tables are summaries of the responses received to the open-ended questions of the survey.

Parents and students were asked questions regarding health and safety, connections to school, connections to teachers as well as their peers. Below is the data resulting from these questions.

Health and Safety Protocols

<i>Safety Protocols</i>	Not confident	Somewhat confident	Reasonably confident	Very confident
PARENT QUESTION: Now that we have been in-person for several weeks, how confident are you in the safety protocols that have been put in place to mitigate exposure?	0.7%	4.5%	25.1%	69.6%
	I do not feel safe.	I feel somewhat safe.	I feel safe most of the time.	I feel very safe.
3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: How safe do you feel at school from exposure to the virus?	1.4%	10.3%	51.8%	36.5%
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: How safe do you feel at school from exposure to the virus?	2.2%	14.4%	49.8%	33.7%

<i>Self-Certification Forms</i>	Difficult to manage	Somewhat difficult to manage	No difficult to manage
PARENT QUESTION: Students coming for in-person learning must self-certify daily. This process is...	1.1%	11.1%	87.8%
	I have forgotten it a lot.	I have forgotten it more than once.	I have never forgotten the form.
3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: How often have you forgotten your self-certification form?	2.1%	21.6%	76.4%
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: How often have you forgotten your self-certification form?	1.8%	17.9%	80.3%

Connection to School

<i>School</i>	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
PARENT QUESTION: A goal of in-person learning is to foster connections for students to the school community. How connected does your child feel to his or her school?	3.5%	14.2%	33%	49.3%
	I do not feel like I'm a part of my school.	I feel like I'm a part of my school sometimes.	I feel like I'm a part of my school most of the time.	I feel like I'm a true Central Fox, Harper Dolphin, McKenzie Cheetah, or Romona Mustang!

3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: Do you feel a part of your school?	1.4%	8.3%	28.7%	61.6%
	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: How connected do you feel to your school?	5.6%	22.1%	47.9%	24.5%

Connection to Teachers

<i>Teachers</i>	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
PARENT QUESTION: Teachers focused on building classroom community to start the school year, and prioritized this as students returned to in-person learning. How connected does your child feel to his or her classroom teacher(s)?	2.1%	10.9%	27.9%	59%
	I do not feel like they know me or I know them.	Sometimes I feel like they know me or I know them.	Most of the time I feel like they know me or I know them.	I feel very close to my teacher.
3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: How close do you feel to your teacher?	1.2%	8.8%	45%	45%
	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: How connected do you feel to your classroom teacher(s)?	5.6%	22.1%	47.9%	24.5%

Connection to Peers

<i>Peers/Students</i>	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
PARENT QUESTION: Teachers focused on building classroom community to start the school year, and prioritized this as students returned to in-person learning. How connected does your child feel to other students in his/her classroom?	5.8%	19.3%	31.7%	43.2%
	I do not feel like they know me or I know them.	Sometimes I feel like they know me or I know them.	Most of the time I feel like they know me or I know them.	I feel very close to other students in my class.
3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: How close do you feel to other students in your class?	3.3%	13%	42.2%	41.5%

	Not very connected	Somewhat connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: How connected do you feel to other students in your group (Group A or Group B)?	8.4%	17.6%	34.6%	39.4%
	I don't feel connected at all.	I feel connected with only the students in my own group.	I feel connected to the homeroom as a whole	
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: Your HOMEROOM is made up of two groups of students - BOTH Group A and Group B. How connected do you feel to ALL of the students in your homeroom?	6.7%	71.3%	22%	

Parent Perspective on Well-Being and Impact on Learning

	Negative Impact	No impact/neutral	Positive Impact	
WELL-BEING What, if any, has been the impact of in-person learning on your child's personal well-being (e.g., self-esteem, mindset)?	2.4%	12%	85%	
	Not concerned at all.	Somewhat concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned
IMPACT ON LEARNING How concerned are you that the learning model will negatively impact your child's academic progress this year?	32%	36.8%	18.3%	12.9%

Student Perspective on In-Person/Hybrid Learning Overall

	It is not going well for me.	It's okay.	I really like in-person learning. It has gone well.
3-4 STUDENT QUESTION: Overall, how has in-person learning gone for you?	2.4%	38%	59.6%
5-8 STUDENT QUESTION: Overall, how has hybrid/in-person learning gone for you?	5.7%	44.3%	50%

Grades 5-8 Specific Questions about the Remote Days of Hybrid Model

<i>Amount of Synchronous Learning on Remote Days</i>	Too little	Just right	Too much
PARENT QUESTION: D39's remote learning plan calls for a specific amount of synchronous learning on remote days (Grades 1-8 = 150 minutes). Taking this into account, is the amount of synchronous engagement your child receives on remote learning days:	49.8%	45%	5.3%

<u>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</u> D39's plan calls for a specific amount of synchronous learning on remote days (Grades 1-8 = 150 minutes). Taking this into account, the amount of synchronous time on your remote days is:	9%	73.6%	9%
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<i>Support on Remote Days</i>	Significant adult support	Moderate adult support	Little to no adult support
<u>PARENT QUESTION:</u> During hybrid remote days, my child requires...	15.1%	30.1%	54.8%
<u>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</u> During remote learning days, I require...	3.3%	23.1%	73.6%

<i>Engagement on Remote Days</i>	Often disengaged, or finishes early	Somewhat engaged	Highly engaged throughout the day
<u>PARENT QUESTION:</u> On hybrid remote days, my child is...	32%	45%	23%
<u>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</u> On remote days, I am	10.9%	49.5%	39.6%

In-Person Learning 2nd Semester Enrollment & School Break Travels

<i>Second Semester Enrollment</i>	Unlikely	Unsure	Likely
<u>PARENT QUESTION:</u> At this time, how likely are you to keep your child enrolled in in-person learning for second semester?	1%	3.9%	95.1%

<i>School Break Travels</i>	No	Yes	Unsure
<u>PARENT QUESTION:</u> Do you plan to travel over Thanksgiving break or Winter Break to a region currently on the State of Illinois restricted travel list (requiring your child to quarantine upon return for 14 days) https://cookcountypublichealth.org/communicable-diseases/covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance/	76.9%	7.9%	15.2%

PARENT OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY

Parents were asked open-ended questions regarding communication, peer relationships, the impact of in-person learning, and the positive aspects of in-person learning. Families also shared how they might improve remote learning for the future.

Communication

90% of families/parents responded that they felt they were receiving information and communication that they needed from the school district, building and teachers in order to be successful during in-person learning. More specifically, parent written responses regarding communication were positive about the classroom communication, although many at the 5-8 level found it difficult to find information and feedback on expectations for remote learning days, and how their child is progressing. Parents at all grade levels wanted more information about curriculum and differentiation.

Regarding district communication, parents would like more streamlined emails and communication from the district. Comments indicated that while there has been a lot of communication from the district, it is often difficult to find the most important information.

Peer Relationships

At the elementary level, parent comments indicated that their children have been happy to attend in-person, and that it has helped students to make connections. It has also been beneficial for their children to have connections with their teachers to ask questions and see them face to face. All of the in-person learning has helped students build their confidence, like school more, and feel more stable. Parents of students with IEPs also shared that it was particularly positive for their children, as remote learning was not effective.

At the 5-8 level parents also commented that students looked forward to the connections they were making on their in-person days. It was stated that students might benefit from additional in-person days so that they could increase interactions, as well as opportunities to connect with students in their opposite learning group. Many parents shared that their child was not placed with friends or people that they knew, so making connections has been slower than in a typical year. Overall, however, parents shared that even minimal interactions have been positive, and students look forward to coming to school as a result.

Impact on Well-Being

At the elementary level, parents shared that their children express a love for school, and are excited to learn daily. They compared this feeling to the spring and many shared that it has been a huge difference. Many parents said that there has been a mindset shift in their children, and that their children seem more motivated to try harder and do homework, which has been of benefit to their academic growth.

At the 5-8 level, this sentiment is also reflected, especially for students on their in-person learning days. Parents shared that their children thrive with the structure of school, and that when they are in-person they have more focus and motivation to do the work. While parents would prefer more in-person learning days, they feel that the in-person days have fostered connections, and interactions with peers, leading to an improved sense of normalcy. Parents would like more direction and engagement on remote learning days, especially at the junior high level.

Positive Aspects of In-Person Learning

Across the grade levels, parents feel that opportunities for in-person learning have given a sense of normalcy and structure for their families. By learning in person, students are making connections with peers, and have the benefit of interactions with their teachers to learn and grow, and get questions answered. Parents have also shared that with students at school, they have time to do their own work more efficiently at home.

Potential impact if moving to fully remote between Thanksgiving and winter break

Responses to this question were mixed. Many parents said that it would have a positive impact by allowing them to travel, see family, and quarantine for older relatives. They did request that they know this ahead of time in order to plan for this trip.

Other parents shared that this type of remote learning pause would be challenging for their families. They cited reasons such as working from home difficulties, inconsistency, and a lack of engagement for their children as why this would be difficult.

While results were mixed, most families said they had expected this might happen, and would work with whatever plan was in place, however did not feel it was in the best interest of their children and their learning.

Ways to Improve In-Person Learning

At the elementary level, parents cited improvements to differentiation, opening the playgrounds at recess, and less use of iPads and Chromebooks during the school day as ways to improve the current structure. At the 5-8 level, parents cited better, more connected and engaging instruction on remote days, more opportunities for in-person days, and increased extra-curricular activities as ways to improve the structure and their child's experience in in-person learning.

At all levels, parents advocated for better solutions for students who were sick or quarantining (*could they Zoom into the classroom?*), implementing daily saliva screening as other schools are exploring, and electronic verification forms as ways to improve the in-person learning experience.

While many suggestions were made, there were an overwhelming number of parents who recognized the hard work of teachers and administrators in making in-person learning happen, and many expressions of gratitude for keeping schools open this long.

STUDENT OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY

Like families and parents, students were asked open-ended questions regarding communication, peer relationships, the impact of in-person learning, and the positive aspects of in-person learning. Students also shared how they might improve in-person learning for the future.

Positive/Easiest Aspects of In-Person Learning

Across the grade levels, students identified the same positive aspects of in-person learning with the most popular being the ability to see other students, friends, and teachers and simply "being together". The students expressed appreciation/relief from technology glitches like logging in to Zooms, shifting from one app, and less screen time. 5th -8th grade students also cited an appreciation of the Hybrid Group A/B model stating that the love of in-person interactions and going to a physical school is balanced by the self-paced style of day on remote days.

Aside from the lack of technology glitches, a theme that emerged from the comments were that students felt noticed and/or seen by teachers (ease of asking a question and receiving assistance) and other students. The socialization aspect of learning outweighed the inconvenience, if any, of adhering to health and safety protocols like face masks and social distancing. Although the 3rd and 4th grade students allude to it, the older students were able to specifically express that in-person learning matches their learning style and that they are able to better focus in the classroom.

Challenging Aspects of In-Person Learning

Students were asked about what made in-person learning challenging and these were the top mentions: lack of mobility, abiding the social distancing guidelines that compete with the desire to interact more with friends/students, and the lunch safety measures such as the shields or not being able to talk. Although they follow the rules of safety very well, they acknowledge that it's a challenge.

Ways to improve In-Person Learning

The majority of student suggestions for improvements to in-person learning centered around continuing to enforce wearing face masks and social distancing. At the same time, students would also appreciate more breaks from the mask, more activities during lunch (using breakout rooms to socialize/talk with friends) or a clear screen so they can see other students as well as increased time outside playing with equipment or learning when the weather allows. This was consistent from third grade through eighth grade.

IN-PERSON CERTIFIED STAFF AND PARAPROFESSIONALS SURVEY RESULTS

A summary of the survey results are presented in the table below. The teacher survey was designed to gather feedback on our modified in-person and hybrid learning programs, now that students have been in-person and the district has been fully implementing these models for several weeks. The administration is using this information to inform next steps and support for our teachers who are in-person with students (ie. training/professional development, human supports etc.). Immediately following the tables is a summary of the responses received to the open-ended questions of the survey.

	Not confident	Somewhat confident	Reasonably confident	Very confident
<u>PK-8th Grade Certified Teachers:</u> How confident are you in the safety protocols that have been put in place to mitigate exposure.	11.2%	44.2%	34.5%	10.1%
<u>PK-4</u>	12%	48%	32%	8%
<u>5-8</u>	10%	40%	38%	12%
<u>PK-8th Grade Paraprofessionals:</u> How confident are you in the safety protocols that have been put in place to mitigate exposure?	15.3%	43.5%	25.9%	15.3%
	Not well	Somewhat well	Reasonably well	Very well
<u>PK-8th Grade Certified Teachers:</u> Building a classroom community was a priority to start the year. How are your students connecting with one another?	2.3%	17.1%	55%	25.6%
<u>PK-4</u>	1%	13%	55%	30%
<u>5-8</u>	3%	22%	55%	20%
	Additional training	Additional support	Additional materials	Additional technology
<u>PK-8th Grade Certified Teachers:</u> What needs do you have to improve your teaching for in-person/hybrid learning model?	26.2%	63.8%	30.8%	15.4%
<u>PK-8th Grade Paraprofessionals:</u> What needs do you have to support your daily work for the in-person/hybrid learning model?	20%	71.4%	14.3%	20%
	It is not going well.	It is going.	It is going well.	
<u>PK-8th Grade Certified Teachers:</u> Overall, how is in-person/hybrid instruction going for you?	5.8%	65.9%	28.3%	

PK-4	2%	59%	39%
5-8	10%	74%	16%
PK-8th Grade Paraprofessionals: Overall, how is in-person/hybrid instruction going for you?	5.9%	54.1%	40%
	Negative impact	No impact/neutral	Positive impact
PK-8th Grade Certified Teachers: What, if any, has been the impact of in-person/hybrid learning on your personal well being (e.g., self-esteem, mindset)?	50.8%	36.4%	12.8%
PK-4	44%	37%	19%
5-8	59%	35%	5%
PK-8th Grade Paraprofessionals: What, if any, has been the impact of in-person/hybrid learning on your personal well being (e.g., self-esteem, mindset)?	34.1%	43.5%	22.4%

TEACHER OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY

Positives and Challenges with In-Person/Hybrid Instruction

Teachers shared that many of the special procedures put in place to support the health, safety, and operation of the schools during this time have been going well:

- Students are typically wearing a mask correctly;
- Students have access to the materials that are needed to be engaged learners;
- Procedures around arrival, departure, and bathroom use are generally going well.

Teachers also reported that in-person/hybrid instruction has had many positives:

- Students have been flexible and willing to work in many different types of learning environments;
- Being with students and colleagues;
- Smaller class sizes have increased the ability to teach, form relationships, and maintain health and safety;

Many teachers reported that students were really happy to be in school, and that their engagement and appreciation for school has improved.

Areas of challenge included the following:

- Students sometimes struggle to maintain a safe social distance;
- Teachers noted that it can be a challenge to support younger students from a safe social distance;
- Small group instruction is challenging due to both social distancing and safety protocols;
- Students struggle with the lack of movement throughout the school day;
- Lunch can be difficult.

Many teachers also indicated that it has been a significant struggle to find the time to appropriately plan, support students and collaborate this year. They referenced the increased demands that are occurring due to safety measures, adjusting curriculum and instruction, and balancing remote and in-person days at the 5-8 level.

Teachers also indicated that additional support is needed in terms of staffing, including both substitutes and supervisors for lunch, recess, arrival and dismissal. Finally, teachers also indicated that while their work has

increased, as they've tried to adapt their instruction to the new realities, other expectations have remained the same or have increased; this has resulted in many teachers feeling overwhelmed.

PARAPROFESSIONAL OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY

Positives and Challenges with In-Person/Hybrid Instruction

Paraprofessionals shared that many of the special procedures put in place to support the health, safety and operation of the schools during this time are going well:

- Students have access to supplies and materials needed to be successful;
- Procedures such as arrival, departure, and bathroom use are successful.

Paraprofessionals also reported that they have observed many positives related to in-person/hybrid learning:

- Students seem to be flexible and adaptable to the learning environment;
- Students are happy to be back at school, and seem to be thriving and more engaged than in previous years;
- The socialization and interaction between students, students and teachers/paraprofessionals, and teachers and paraprofessionals has been really positive;
- Students seem to be developing strong routines and for the most part, following through with health and safety expectations;

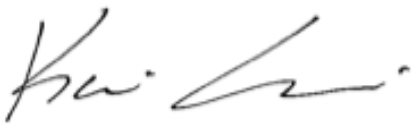
Areas of challenge included the following:

- Students maintaining consistent social distancing, especially on the playground;
- Students needing to stay in the same place for extended periods of time;
- Some students continue to need reminders regarding proper mask wearing;
- The thermometers work inconsistently outdoors with the colder weather;
- It can be challenging to work in multiple classes during the day due to the need to sub;
- Having enough supervisors for lunch, clean up and on the playground.

Next Steps/Conclusion

A targeted review of the In-Person Learning Program is in process. A team of staff members and administrators will review all survey data. After reviewing all feedback, the team will evaluate the current program and identify 2-3 areas that can be strengthened and improved. Based on identified areas for improvement, recommendations will be made, and an action plan developed. The Board of Education can expect an update at a future meeting.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent