



September 24, 2020

Dear MAS Parent and Staff Members

I have received a few notes from parents and community members inquiring about what goes into the COVID related decisions we are making. You certainly may/should have questions. This letter intends to offer you some insight and clarity into our decision-making process as well as what lies ahead in the next few weeks.

Part of Governor Walz's Safe Learning Plan requires MAS to create a COVID Command Team to meet periodically, review COVID data and work together to determine the various learning scenarios. The Command Team has 13 members including educators, health care professionals and school board members. The Team regularly reviews COVID data for Pope County and our schools. This data changes daily and can take significant swings up or down. Instead of looking at data from any given day, we have been instructed that best practice guides us to look at the *local trends*.

Once a decision is made that requires a change in learning scenario, the Team will give students, families and staff as much notice as is reasonably possible. The Team knew in advance when it decided to rescind the 7th-8th grade plan of attendance that changing the decision would bring criticism but our focus is on student and staff safety not popularity, so the decision stood.

Furthermore, there is another governance body we are required to work with and that is the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL). Monday, September 21, the MSHSL Board of Directors reversed the decision it made earlier in the summer deciding volleyball and football could begin practices with certain restrictions in both sports beginning Monday, September 28.

MAS leaders' sharpest focus will be on providing our students the opportunities to participate and compete during this school year. We will ask the MSHSL, Departments of Health and Education how/or if we can safely allow fan participation. But, student participation will be our highest priority and we will not do anything that will jeopardize our programs being closed down preventing our students from participating. Given the rules we are supposed to follow, I hope you can see this is a perilous situation and it feels like the line we are walking is very thin.

It is important for everyone to understand we are not making the rules. We would be neglecting professional responsibilities if we ignored the rules. And we don't want to do one single thing that jeopardizes the chance for our students to safely participate in both academics and extracurricular activities.

The COVID numbers we work with are very fluid and may require us to change often as we go through the year. Please remain "flexible and nimble" as we move through the upcoming weeks. We should not be surprised by any of these changes. This IS the year of change! We will be healthiest if we expect change and continue to develop the capacity to roll with it!

We very much appreciate your ongoing support and cooperation in this matter.

Most Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Ellingworth".

Rick Ellingworth

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