



November 10, 2020

Dear Minnewaska Staff, Students and Parents:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you Minnewaska Area Schools (MAS) will be making changes to its COVID related Learning Scenario for 7th-12th graders only. Please note the following:

- **There will be NO CHANGE in our Kindergarten---6th grade Learning Scenario.**
- **Effective Monday, November 16, MAS 7th-12th grades will transition from HYBRID to DISTANCE LEARNING. The following transition schedule will be followed:**
 - **Wednesday, November 11th will be a Hybrid B Day for 7th-12th graders**
 - **Thursday, November 12th will be a Hybrid A Day for 7th-12th graders**
 - **Friday, November 13th NO school is scheduled for 7th-12th graders. Teachers of 7th-12th graders will use the day to prepare for the transition to Distance Learning.**
 - **Monday, November 16, 7th-12th graders will begin Distance Learning every day until further notice.**

I want to share a little bit about this decision. We have tried to communicate in previous letters that we may need to change our Learning Scenario from time to time and that time has arrived. The MAS Command Team has placed a very high priority on keeping our 7th-12th grade students in school (present with their teachers in our hybrid model)

We have been able to do that throughout the first quarter of the school year. Much of that was made possible by following the Minnesota Department of Health Safe Learning guidance. Wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing make a difference! Even though the Pope County (and surrounding County) Covid numbers are spiking, the MAS student Covid numbers indicating “active cases” are low as you can see on our [MAS Website COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

However, the Command Team interacts with other indicators. The following factors are guiding our most recent decision:

- The numbers of staff and students under quarantine due to close contact with confirmed COVID cases continues to follow the trend line of our county case rate data. Recently, we have had approximately 200 students and as many as 25 staff members quarantined. *(This means these students and staff have to be out of school for as long as 14 days.)*
- We are experiencing a shortage of substitute teachers and staff. This means the district does not have enough substitutes to cover staff absences mostly due to quarantine. This makes it very difficult to conduct school business.

It is fair to question why we are continuing to maintain our K-6 grade “In Person Learning Scenario. As we explained at the beginning of the year, we have prioritized the K-6th grade “In Person Learning” and we are safely maintaining that commitment to our youngest learners and their families as discussed at the beginning of the year.

The decision to change the learning scenario was made late this afternoon. The MAS School Board and Command Team thought it was paramount to share the initial information with you as soon as possible. The Middle and High School Principals will be providing more specific information in the very near future. The 7th-12th grade teaching staff will inform our 7th-12th grade students of the changes in their classes Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Your ongoing support is appreciated. Hopefully, these changes will be short-lived and we will be back in Hybrid or In Person Learning at the 7th-12th grades soon.

Respectfully,

Rick Ellingworth, Interim Superintendent