

Updates and Information

I have had many meetings this week to discuss where we are currently at in the district. As you have seen, information and decisions can change quickly catching many by surprise.

Bell Study

I was decided in December that the bell times would change to the chart below starting in 2022.

Bell Time Proposal Option B

High Schools*	8:20 AM to 3:30 PM
Middle Schools	8:20 AM to 3:00 PM
Elementary Schools	9:35 AM to 4:00 PM

***RALC 8:25 AM to 3:10 PM**

High School daily instructional time 6 hours 34 minutes. Currently 6 hours 43 min.
Middle School daily instructional time is 6 hours 10 minutes. Currently 6 hours 20 min.
Elementary School daily instructional time is 6 hours 5 minutes. Currently 6 hours
RALC daily instructional time is 6 hours 15 minutes. Currently 6 hours 5 minutes

If you watched the Board on Tuesday night, you saw that an amendment was passed so bell times will change in the fall of 2021. I have had several people email letting me know that they are unhappy with the change. This has issue has been on the board agendas for the past 2 years and has taken several forms. Teachers made their voices heard, I have talked with the board, members of cabinet and transportation. The board has read sleep studies and had even had medical professionals speak at board meetings regarding the need for secondary to have a later start. Full disclosure, the board has tossed this around for 20 years. So, with the facts of a 2 tier system for bussing, turnaround times for bussing multiple levels and parents input about not wanting their elementary students at bus stops at 6:50 am for an 8 am start limited the elementary start time options. I am not happy about this change either, but at this time I don't see this changing.

Regarding the Board, I suggest all of you watch the budget study session they had on Tuesday night. John Carlson does an excellent job for the district in presenting data so that people can understand it! He had two guests that talked about levy options and where we stand financially compared to other like districts in the state. The information was sobering and you can see how COVID has affected the district. It will be important to connect with your legislators to secure funding in this session. Since we have lost 600+ students at this time, the impacts will be severely felt. Yes, many of these students will probably come back, but funding is based on who we have in seats right now. When the call comes, please take the time reach out to our senators and representatives to secure funding for the district.

Vaccinations

We still have many rumors out regarding vaccinations. First, it is voluntary to get vaccinated. The district can't mandate it as a term of employment. Second, the district has nothing to do with when we get vaccinated. They have drafted a priority list for being vaccinated as was asked for in our COVID Task Force. We will either be vaccinated through Mayo Clinic or Olmsted County when the doses are secured. Our district has advocated to move educators farther up the list and EDMN is also pushing for that to occur. Other than that, RPS will wait and let people know when to expect our turn.

Re Opening Plans

First, and most important, fill out the survey by the district that has been emailed. There has been a strong showing so far with approximately 415 elementary, 350+ secondary and various from SPED etc. Common theme that is being seen is that staff are wanting to be vaccinated before coming back to the in person model. As results are relayed to me, I will give them to you. I believe that the district is sharing results with the Board during the January 19 meeting. PLEASE fill out the survey if you haven't already.

There was a committee meeting with staff in the MS and HS school this morning dealing with plans to re-open. There was a lot of discussion around the learning pathways that can be utilized in the secondary setting. You will be hearing more about that from your contacts in your respective buildings. They will be asking for your thoughts and input regarding our meeting. Please give your feedback when asked, so that we have a true sense of what needs are out there. Also, there has been some confusion regarding DL teachers in the secondary. In the elementary, it was much easier to configure DL classrooms. In the secondary, there is no guarantee that the right combination of staff and students will exist to create a DL section. It will depend on certifications and/or licensures. This is an item that is being currently worked on now that staff have turned in their survey on returning to the building.

One concern that has come up is the use of mask and face shield. Yes, you will have to wear this whether you are with students or other staff. This may cause some issues when teaching in the classroom. To address this issue, the district has purchased some amplifiers to try in classrooms. If they work, more will be ordered. If you are a person that is using one for trial purposes, would you please contact me so that I can find out how they are working. There are lots of tech issues around the mask and shield mandate.

Thanks,

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