



Board of Education Recap

October 6, 2020

Good Tuesday, Vikings!

It felt so good to bring back our monthly *Student Showcase*. Last night, the Board recognized **Esperanza Vargas-Santos**, Intermediate Center fifth grader! **Principal Hauge** could not have selected a more deserving student to kick us off for 2020-21. Ms. Hauge told us, “Espy, as her friends call her, is writing a chapter book. Throughout the summer she would provide me copies of her story about a cat.” She continued, “Esperanza has a wonderful heart. One day in class, students were asked to create a card to warm the spirits of someone in need. Espy actually wrote 13 cards! That embodies our Espy!”

A team of Vikings visited Esperanza’s house, recently, to hand deliver a certificate and celebrate this very special little girl. Here’s a snapshot of our special afternoon. 



Building Bridges Update: Building Bridges is a collaboration between Catholic Charities, Dane County Department of Human Services and the Mount Horeb Area School District. It is a 90 day crisis intervention program serving students in K – 8th grade. If there a student with significant behavior struggles and/or mental health challenges school leaders will talk with the parent/guardian about Building Bridges services. If a parent is in agreement about participating, the school will make a referral to the Building Bridges staff. Each Building Bridges team serving a school district is made up of two staff – a Clinical Coordinator and a School Coordinator. This team shares a full caseload of 10 – 12 students at a time. The Clinical Coordinator focuses their work on the school team (and some minimal one-on-one work with the student, if appropriate) at the exact same time the Service Coordinator is doing in-home work with the parent/guardian. The Clinical Coordinator and the Service Coordinator stay in very close communication to collaborate on each case and make sure their teammate is up to date on the work they are doing with either the school team or the parent/guardian. Given the uniqueness of the pandemic, Building Bridges team members were on hand to discuss progress and encourage a new round of participants. If you believe this support could be of service to your student/family, please make direct contact with Principal [Rachael Johnson](#) (ELC/PC), Principal [Katie Hauge](#) (Intermediate Center), or Principal [Paul Christiansen](#) (Middle School).

COVID 19 Update: At the Board's September 21 meeting, the administration made a recommendation for K-2 students to return to in-person learning for the start of the second quarter. We were asked to develop a plan for the Board’s consideration at last night’s meeting. [You may find that plan here.](#)

Last updated October 1, 2020; Data from September 15 to September 28
Current average number of cases per day, averaged over 14-day period: 139

Grade Levels	Target for Possibly Resuming In-Person Pupil Instruction	Status
K-2	A 14-day average of 54 or fewer cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Met on August 18, may open per Public Health recommendations PDF
3-5	A 14-day average of 39 or fewer cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Not met
6-12	A 14-day average of 19 or fewer cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Not met

The Board's previously approved "[Gradual Reopening Plan](#)" relies upon consultation with the scientists and epidemiologists working with Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC). Based on our teachers’ thoughtful presentation to the Board, the vast majority of our K-2 teachers support following PHMDC’s metric when determining a return to school. So what is PHMDC’s metric?



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As you will notice, the most recent average exceeds the benchmark previously established by PHMDC. When I asked, PHMDC told me, failure to meet “the benchmark does not mean school closure. If we are not at 54, that means we [PHMDC] will reassess closure.”

When I asked what goes into reassessing, PHMDC wrote, “If Dane County surpasses 54 cases over a 14-day average, PHMDC will review local data to determine whether a county-wide closure of in-person instruction is recommended. PHMDC will review outbreak data and make a determination based on several factors, including but not limited to number of positive cases, extent of exposure, and contact tracing capacity.”

DRAFT Criteria for moving from Step 2 (Staff Return) to Step 3 (Hybrid/Virtual Learning (Limited In-Person Attendance))

- Internal benchmarks including safety protocols and staff training
- PHMDC Orders and Guidance allow for limited in-person attendance
- PHMDC data and *Forward Dane* metrics
 - Dane County in Phase 2 or higher of [Forward Dane](#)
 - All [Forward Dane](#) metrics are reported for the previous 2 weeks
 - 2-week declining trend in 7-day average of new cases ([PHMDC data dashboard](#))
 - Lab Reporting Timeliness & Contact Tracing is **Yellow** ([Forward Dane metrics](#))
 - Community Spread metric is **Yellow** ([Forward Dane metrics](#))

According to the PHMDC, these last three items on the Board approved [Gradual Reopening Plan](#) have not been met. Currently, the bottom two benchmarks are red.

All of this gave the majority of the Board pause. A motion to return our K-2 students at the beginning of the 2nd quarter failed (4 to 3); however, the Board was intent to provide some clarity. A second motion passed unanimously directing the administration to begin planning so that when the above metrics are reached we can as soon as practical.

I remain heartened that everyone, regardless of their interests, wants what they believe is best for our children. In the interim, we will:

1. Continue developing our K-2 schedule for a hybrid model.
2. Continue monitoring the weekly numbers published by PHMDC.
3. When the plan is developed with staff input, we can begin identifying which parents want all virtual/hybrid. Once that information is cemented from our parents, our in-person staffing levels, employee accommodations, transportation scheduling, etc. can move forward. Our goal is to give our families what they desire.
4. In order to reduce the stress our teachers are coping with around any guilt they have about taking leave, we will begin the process of advertising for specific long-term substitutes via [WECAN](#). We remain hopeful that we can find suitable replacements to help continue our students’ learning. If you have interest, won’t you please reach out to **Ms. Sara Errthum**, Human Resources Coordinator, at 608-437-7034.

Long Range Facilities Planning – Anyone driving around the District this summer saw additional capital work was taking place. This was possible due to savings from our first round of referendum dollars. This summer’s projects also came in under budget and permits us to complete *even more* work than anticipated. [Here is](#) what the Board approved with the remaining dollars.

Finally, last Wednesday morning, members of the Board met to interview students for our available vacancies on the Education, Community and Legislative Engagement, and Finance subcommittees. In addition, they selected a student representative to attend full Board meetings. **Katherine "Kate" Geisler** is a senior and attended last night's meeting. Here are the names of other civic minded leaders:

- Finance Committee - **Molly Maguire** (12) **Iris Murphy** (10), and **Claire Tranel** (11)
- Education Committee - **Tess Purin** (11) and **Margaret Harvey** (11)
- Community and Legislative Engagement Committee - **Mary Harvey** (11)
- Safety and Wellness Committee - **Emma Gundrum** (12)



Steve Salerno

It’s students like these that make me proud to be a Viking, and I hope you are too!