

RLASD COVID Related Update and Resulting Changes (11-17-20)

Greetings from the Rice Lake Area School District,

I want to thank you for your patience and support as we navigate through the current pandemic challenges. We feel fortunate to have been able to offer both in-person and distance learning options this year. Our staff members worked diligently to make this happen, and they deserve recognition for their continued dedication and teamwork.

Due to an increase in COVID cases and the effects on staff availability due to either positive tests or quarantines, effectively staffing our buildings has been, and continues to be, an increasingly significant challenge. The number of staff members absent from work due to COVID related concerns (positive test, illness, quarantine, or loss of childcare) for the week of November 9 is as follows:

- Monday, November 9 - 50 staff members, with 53 total staff absences
- Tuesday, November 10 - 50 staff members, with 65 total staff absences
- Wednesday, November 11 - 53 staff members, with 62 total staff absences
- Thursday, November 12 - 53 staff members, with 66 total staff absences
- Friday, November 13 - 53 staff members, with 66 total staff absences

Additionally, the table below gives a current and historical summary of COVID related cases in our buildings as of last Friday. I do not have updated numbers as of this morning, But I can tell you the number of positive tests and quarantines (both student and staff) has increased in at least four out of the five buildings since then.

School	Total Positive Cases (students)	ACTIVE Positive Cases (students)	Active Quarantines (students)	Total Positive Cases (staff)	ACTIVE Positive Cases (staff)	Total Active Quarantines (staff)
Haugen	0	0	3	1	1	1
Hilltop	5	2	31	3	1	3
Tainter	10	9	81	10	6	23
RLMS	24	6	78	7	5	5
RLHS/RCS	43	10	75	10	4	5
Other				3	0	0
TOTALS:	82	27	252	34	17	36

Our options moving forward are to continue with a reactionary approach, or adopt a planned approach. We have chosen to adopt a planned approach, as using a reactionary approach is proving unsustainable. Over the course of the next two and half weeks, changes will be implemented to hopefully improve staffing levels, and also allow time to monitor the numbers within the district and at our local level. Decisions on instructional models will be based on these numbers. The changes moving forward include:

Week of November 16 - 20

- Continue with in-person instruction district-wide
- Prepare students for the upcoming week of distance learning
 - Ensure students understand the process and are able to access and use their distance learning tools
 - Distribute devices to students who need them
 - Communicate with parents to prepare for the shift for the week of November 30 - December 4

Week of November 23 - 24

- Staff In-Service
- Students will not be in attendance these two days. This is a change, as these days were previously scheduled as student contact days.

Week of November 30 - December 4

- Implement full distance-learning district-wide for the week in all buildings

- Each level will implement pre-planned schedules

After December 4

Student and staff data related to COVID will be collected and analyzed in two-week increments. The data, combined with discussion at the building level, will result in an instructional model decision for the next two weeks for that particular building. Individual buildings may operate in different instructional models to include full face-to-face learning, blended/hybrid learning, or full distance-learning models, depending on the numbers specific to that building. On Wednesday, December 2, you will receive communication explaining the learning model which will be in effect for each building beginning on Monday, December 7.

In addition to this communication I am sending, you will also be receiving communication from the individual school(s) your child(ren) attend. The communication will explain in greater detail the daily schedule, student learning and attendance expectations, updated information for students with special education needs, and additional information.

Other Announcements:

- The Boys and Girls Clubs of Barron County will be open all day on Monday and Tuesday of next week, as well as the week of November 30 – December 4.
- Winter middle school and high school athletic practices will continue at this time.
- Additional information will be forthcoming for families interested in meal distribution. Meal distribution will likely occur on Mondays.

The changes at this time will cause disruption for a number of families in the school district, including the families of our own staff members. I understand this, and I am sorry for the circumstances. I also know that some will applaud the actions being taken on the part of the school district, and others will condemn them. This is the reality of the landscape we have operated in since March. Ultimately, we knew flexibility was going to be needed to contend with the ever-changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, we need to respond in an effort to slow the viral-spread in our community, and improve our staff availability. I am asking you to do what you can to help make this happen.

If you have questions or need additional information, please continue to reach out to the building(s) where your child(ren) attend, and feel free to contact me as well. We want to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Randy Drost
District Administrator
Rice Lake Area School District