

# BEMIDJI

AREA SCHOOLS

## 2020-2021

# Reopening Plan

**In-Person Learning**

**Hybrid Learning**

**Distance Learning**



**BEMIDJI AREA SCHOOLS  
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**

**2020-2021 SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We are living in unprecedented times. Not only are we facing a worldwide health crisis, we are also facing an educational crisis for our children. In March of 2020, our schools were closed and we entered a “distance learning” environment. Our teachers and families partnered to provide academic support for students to ensure they would be able to complete the school year. All employees of Bemidji Area Schools, parents and guardians, and our community gave their very best to ensure students continued to learn, received nutritious meals, and provided childcare for the essential workers in our community. Everyone involved in this effort deserves our gratitude.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our daily lives and changes the way we conduct our work, commerce and social activities; we must find a way to continue to provide the educational services our students deserve. Over the last several months, the school district leadership team has been working with stakeholders and listening to the advice of health care providers to develop a plan to provide a high- quality education for our children in a safety-enhanced learning environment. Based on guidance from federal, state and local health officials and considering input from stakeholders, we understand that there is no one option that will be right for every family. We have developed our 2020-2021 School Reopening Plan around three scenarios outlined in the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools:

- **Scenario 1: In-person Learning for all Students**
  - Under this scenario, the school year would start with a safety-enhanced traditional learning experience. Steps have been developed and are being continuously refined to ensure that students and staff will be prepared to attend school in a safe and healthy learning environment. Our goal will be to ensure that every student has **access to** a device available to assist in the learning experience and be prepared, in the event of schools closing due to COVID-19, to move to a Distance Learning environment. Every family may elect Distance Learning for their student(s)
  
- **Scenario 2: Hybrid Model**
  - Under this scenario, students will be placed in two groups and will rotate on a weekly basis of In-person Learning and Distance Learning. Our goal will be to ensure that every student has **access to** a device to assist in the Distance Learning portion.
  
- **Scenario 3: Distance Learning**
  - Under this scenario, students will receive instruction through a Digital Synchronous Learning (DSL) experience (online with the teacher and peers simultaneously). Unlike last spring, students will be attending school on an established schedule as if they were attending school in the physical setting. Students will be expected to log-in and attend each course/grade level for which they are enrolled. If a student does not have internet access, access to a device or it is determined that participation in a DSL experience is not academically appropriate, alternative instructional delivery models may be implemented.

**Determination of Learning Model**

On July 30, 2020, Governor Walz, along with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), announced Minnesota’s Safe Learning Plan for the 2020-21 School Year. Here are the major points of the Safe Learning Plan:

- School districts must use learning models based on the current COVID-19 infection rate in their counties based upon 14-day rolling averages.
- As infection rates increase or decrease, schools will be able to alternate between different learning models throughout the year.
- During hybrid and distance learning periods, when students are not receiving in-person instruction, Bemidji Area Schools will continue to provide care for enrolled students age 12 and under who are the children of critical workers.

The learning model parameters are as follows:

<b>Number of cases per 10,000 residents over 14 days by county</b>	<b>Learning Model</b>
0-9	In-person learning for all students
10-19	In-person learning for elementary students; hybrid learning for secondary students
20-29	Hybrid learning for all students
30-49	Hybrid learning for elementary students; distance learning for secondary students
50+	Distance learning for all students

The Learning Model in which Bemidji Area Schools will start the 2020-2021 school year will be determined no later than one week prior to the start of the school year.

**General Health & Safety Considerations**

- Symptom screening for all staff and students will include daily screening questions and may include temperature checks. Parents and staff will be asked to certify daily that they and/or their student(s) are fever/symptom free.
  - Do you or your child have a fever (greater than 100.4 F) OR symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat, muscle aches, and/or loss of taste or smell?
  - Have you or your child come into close contact (15+ minutes) with someone who is being evaluated/tested for or has a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis in the past 14 days?
- A student who develops a temperature of 100.4 or higher and/or COVID-19 related symptoms during the school day will be isolated under adult supervision and parents will be contacted to pick up the child.
- All students and staff will be required to have a cloth face covering. One face covering will be provided for each student and employee. Students and employees may use a personally purchased face covering that snugly covers the nose and mouth. Those who forget to bring

their face covering to school will have one provided to them. Parents and guardians are being asked to verify that students have their face coverings each day prior to leaving home.

- Students and staff will be required to wear cloth face coverings while on buses, while inside schools, and while outdoors during school hours and social distancing is not possible. Students and staff may temporarily remove face coverings in certain situations as outlined in the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools](#). Students who refuse to wear a face covering as required will be sent home and provided with Distance Learning until they can return to school in compliance with face covering mandates.
- Social distancing in common areas and where feasible will be facilitated with signs and floor markers for safe distancing and directional movement.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be placed throughout the schools and in classrooms where sinks with soap and water are unavailable.
- Students will be scheduled for hand sanitizing and washing throughout the day.
- Custodial and school staff will deploy increased cleaning protocols in all areas of the school with special attention to high-touch surfaces/areas.
- Access to the interior of all schools will be limited to essential school district personnel and contract workers only.
- Parent conferences/meetings will be held in designated meeting spaces or virtually, as necessary.

## **Teaching & Learning**

### **Scenario 1: In-person Learning for all Students**

- Each student will attend school on campus in a safety-enhanced traditional manner with added safety precautions as noted.
- Students will be socially distanced where feasible using guidelines provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Center for Disease Control (CDC), and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).
- Movement within buildings will be limited to the greatest extent possible by keeping students and staff in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible throughout the day and from day to day.
- Mixing between cohort groups will be limited to the greatest extent possible (i.e., during lunch, bathroom breaks, arrival and dismissal, recess, etc.)
- Student attendance will be taken daily.
- Students who are diagnosed with infectious or communicable illnesses such as COVID-19, influenza, strep throat, etc., must remain home for a specified period of time as determined by the Licensed School Nurse in consultation with the building Principal.
- In the event of a temporary closure, all students will receive instruction under a Distance Learning model.
- For families who are uncomfortable with the In-person Learning model, the District will offer enrolled students a digital synchronous (online) learning experience. It is important to note that internet access must be available during the school day for this option. Students attending online will be on the same bell schedule as if they were attending school in the physical setting. Students will be expected to log on and attend each class as if they were onsite. Note: parents/guardians wishing to exercise this option must notify the district by completing a [Distance Learning Election Option Form](#) which can be found on the front page of the district's website or by clicking on the link above.

### **Scenario 2: Hybrid Model**

- Fifty percent (50%) of all students will attend school on campus in a safety-enhanced traditional manner every other week with added safety precautions as noted. During the weeks when students are not attending school on campus, they will receive digital synchronous (online) instruction.
- Students, during In-Person Learning weeks, will be socially distanced where feasible using guidelines provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Center for Disease Control (CDC), and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).
- Movement within buildings, during In-Person Learning weeks, will be limited to the greatest extent possible by keeping students and staff in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible throughout the day and from day to day.
- Mixing between cohort groups, during In-Person Learning weeks, will be limited to the greatest extent possible (i.e. during lunch, bathroom breaks, arrival and dismissal, recess, etc.).
- Student attendance will be taken daily during both In-Person Learning and Distance Learning weeks.
- Students who are diagnosed with infectious or communicable illnesses such as COVID-19, influenza, strep throat, etc., must remain home for a specified period of time as determined by the Licensed School Nurse in consultation with the building Principal.
- In the event of a temporary closure, all students will receive instruction under a Distance Learning model.
- For families who are uncomfortable with the In-person Learning portion of the Hybrid Model, the District will offer enrolled students a digital synchronous (online) learning experience. It is important to note that internet access must be available during the school day for this option. Students attending online will be on the same bell schedule as if they were attending school in the physical setting. Students will be expected to log on and attend each class as if they were onsite. Note: parents/guardians wishing to exercise this option must notify the district by completing a [Distance Learning Election Option Form](#) which can be found on the front page of the district's website or by clicking on the link above.

### **Scenario 3: Distance Learning**

- All students will attend school virtually and participate in classes daily via digital synchronous learning through Google Classroom. Students will participate in their classes with their peers in real time and will be responsible for completing all assignments. Schools will provide a schedule for each student. Note: Daily instruction will include a mixture of online and independent student work.
- Families who do not have a device with Google Classroom capabilities, during the scheduled instructional time, will be provided with alternative delivery methods. Alternative delivery methods may include paper packets or online video lessons.
- Student attendance will be counted by students logging into Google Classroom. Students who are absent will be marked excused or unexcused based on the guidelines found in the applicable student handbook.

### **Child Nutrition: Meals**

- Meals will be available at all schools. Students may also bring their lunches as in the past.
- Some students may have meals delivered to their classrooms.

- Some students will pick up their meals from the cafeteria and be allowed to eat in their classrooms or an area that allows for social distancing.
- Students may be placed on an alternate schedule for cafeteria usage.

#### **Transportation:**

- Regular transportation routes will be used. However, we encourage parents to bring their child(ren) to school if personal transportation is available.
- Hand sanitizing will take place as students board the bus.
- Students, Bus Drivers and Bus Monitors/Paraprofessionals will be required to wear cloth face coverings while riding on buses.
- Students will have assigned seats on the bus with household/family members sitting together.
- Buses will be sanitized after morning, mid-day, and afternoon routes.
- Passenger cabin air filters will be cleaned and replaced more frequently to ensure adequate ventilation.

#### **Extracurricular Activities & Athletics**

- Each activity/sport will provide parents/guardians and students with additional guidelines.
- The District will implement mandates and guidelines as issued by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) regarding activities and athletics.
- Season length and number of competitions may be reduced.
- Travel may be reduced or eliminated.

#### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

We have been working with staff and surveying parents/guardians, students, and the community to identify questions and concerns regarding the reopening of our schools. The following is a list of responses to the most frequently identified questions. The District will update these periodically on our website as we receive more questions and information related to COVID-19 changes. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to help us prepare for a successful 2020-2021 school year.

#### **Safety**

##### **Q. What steps will staff take to prevent the spread of germs in each classroom?**

A. The District will provide increased custodial services to sanitize throughout the day in high touch areas. As part of our procedures, we will teach students proper handwashing techniques, require students and staff to wash hands often, and require social distancing when feasible. Each night our custodial and maintenance staff will clean the building employing CDC and MDH recommended sanitizing methods.

##### **Q. How will we teach students to understand the CDC recommendations for hygiene?**

A. The District's Licensed School Nurse and Health Paraprofessionals will provide in-person and video-based training to students, staff, and parents/guardians in classrooms, through the District website and District social media.

##### **Q. Is there enough personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies?**

A. Yes. The District will provide necessary PPE to appropriate staff. Every student and staff member will be provided with one cloth face covering. Students and staff may use an appropriate cloth face covering that they have purchased as long as it fits snugly and covers the nose and mouth. The District will have extra face coverings available in the event a student leaves his/her face covering at home. Parents/guardians will need to verify that their children have their face coverings with them for school every day. Face coverings must be laundered/washed frequently as recommended by the CDC and MDH.

**Q. What type of additional supplies are needed for students?**

A. Students will be allowed to bring water to school in a reusable water bottle that can be refilled at touchless water filling stations. Parents may also provide additional personal protective equipment, such as extra cloth face coverings and hand sanitizer in personal use bottles no larger than two (2) ounces.

**Q. At what times throughout the day will students be required to wear a face covering?**

A. Students, staff and any other individuals in a school must wear a face covering when on a bus, and while in school buildings and district offices. Face coverings may be temporarily removed in the following situations:

- When engaging in indoor physical activities and during classes or activities held outdoors
- Pre-kindergarten students age five (5) years and younger participating in programming in a school building or district office.
- While eating or drinking.
- When entering a building during the school day or for a school event and directed by school staff to briefly remove the face covering for the purpose of checking identification.
- Staff working alone in their offices, classrooms, vehicles or other job locations where there is no person-to-person interaction and staff working at desks/cubicles that have barriers, such as cubicle walls, between employees.
- When communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing or has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with a face covering difficult, provided that social distancing is maintained to the extent possible.

**Teaching & Learning**

**Q. What will the classroom look like?**

A. Since each class is its own unique space, there will not be a common configuration. We will configure each class based on the size, function, and grade level. The CDC and MDH guidelines are guiding principles and our goal is to practice social distancing in each classroom and to be creative about using all opportunities to increase the physical space between students and staff.

**Q. What will school look like for the most vulnerable students who need individualized services?**

A. As always, we will follow the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or 504 Plan for each student. School may look different for each student depending on his/her needs.

**Q. Are the teachers going to move to different classes to teach different subjects or are the students going to move to the teachers?**

A. As part of a typical school schedule, students transition to different parts of the building throughout the day (i.e. library, music, art, PE, speech, office, computer lab, etc.). In an effort to keep all students and staff safe, and schedules will be adjusted to allow students to remain in their homerooms as much as possible throughout the day.

**Q. In Scenario 3: Distance Learning, how will attendance be tracked?**

A. Students are compulsory school age until age 17. It will be required that students participate in their Google Classroom online classes using provided class schedules.

**Q. Will my child receive grades if he/she is quarantined?**

A. Yes. Students in quarantine will be held to the same standards as students who are present in the school. They will be required to participate in online classes using Google Classroom to communicate with teachers and complete assignments. We ask parents to keep an open line of communication with teachers and ensure all contact information is accurate and up to date.

**Q. If a parent chooses to keep their child at home, will this be considered truant?**

A. Enrolled students whose parents choose the Distance Learning option, will be required to log in daily to be considered in attendance for that day. Failure to log in will count as an absence and will be marked as excused or unexcused.

**Q. If I choose to keep my child(ren) home, will the school provide the technology needed for all kids to continue learning?**

A. Yes, the district will provide each family with a Google Classroom compatible device if one is not already available in their household. Due to limitations in the number of devices available, the District may only be able to provide one device per family.

**Q. Will my child be sharing supplies with other students at school?**

A. No, each child will have his/her own school supplies.

**Q. Will students have break times to get fresh air outside?**

A. Yes, students will be able to have break times with their class. Students will not be in their classrooms all day. Outdoor activities will be dependent on weather conditions.

**Q. Will the students have recess/specialist/elective classes during the school day (PE, music, art)?**

A. Yes, we value the inclusion of play and the arts in our schools. Students will have opportunities for recess and instruction from specialists. However, entire grade levels or multiple classrooms will not congregate on the same playground or location.

**Q. What is the difference between homeschooling and Distance Learning?**

A. Distance Learning is a district program that allows students to receive instruction from home under the guidance of Bemidji Area Schools teachers. This is a recommended option for families



who do not feel comfortable sending their children to the physical building due to concerns related to COVID-19. Families using this option will need access to reliable Wi-Fi services. Homeschooling is not associated with Bemidji Area Schools, however home schooled students who are compulsory school age must be registered with the Bemidji Area Schools Registration Office and follow state guidelines.

**Q. Will students be able to participate in vocal music and/or band?**

A. Vocal music and band have been identified as high risk activities. We are waiting for additional guidance from MDE, MDH and public health agencies.

**Support Services**

**Cafeteria**

**Q. Will the cafeteria be serving hot meals for breakfast and lunch?**

A. Yes, both hot and cold meals will be served.

- Breakfast will be Grab and Go for specified sites and/or grade levels.
- Some students will have lunches brought to their classrooms and some students will go to the cafeteria to receive their meals, which will be consumed in their classrooms or in other designated areas that provide for social distancing.
- As conditions improve, small groups of students may be allowed to eat in the cafeteria using physical distancing.

**Q. Can parents and families come to eat lunch with students?**

A. No, we are limiting visitors in our schools as part of our safety protocols.

**Transportation**

**Q. How will students be transported safely on school buses?**

A. Parents who can provide transportation are strongly encouraged to do so. All other students will be transported to school. Due to the number of students per bus, students will be required to wear face coverings while riding, will be screened for symptoms, and will sit in family groups to be eligible to ride.

**Health Services**

**Q. If my child has a fever, will I have to get him/her tested for COVID-19?**

A. The decision to test a student for COVID-19 is one that will be made by parents and health care providers. Appropriate exclusion period(s) will apply before the student may return to school.

**Q. How long will a student have to stay out of school, if he/she has a fever?**

A. Students with fevers will be sent home and may not return until they have completed the appropriate exclusion period based on the most current MDH guidance.

**Q. Will the school nurse/health paraprofessional be able to test for COVID-19?**

A. No, COVID-19 testing is conducted through non-school health officials/providers.

**Q. What will be the triggers for closing schools again after reopening?**

A. Local short-term closures may be required with confirmed outbreak in a class or school. Bemidji Area Schools will work with the State's Regional Rapid Response Team to determine when a change in learning model or a temporary closure is necessary.

**Q. How will I be notified if my child is exposed to COVID-19?**

A. Official communications (by letter and/or telephone) will come from the school. We will not use social media to communicate exposure information. All communications will be done in coordination with local public health officials while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and all other state and federal laws.

**Q. What happens if a student in my child's class tests positive for COVID?**

A. With an identified diagnosis of COVID-19 in a class (a teacher, staff or a student), we will notify parents via official school communication (by letter and/or telephone) and require the impacted student(s) in that class participate in distance learning for a period of time as indicated by current CDC and MDH guidance. We will ask parents of other children to monitor them for symptoms and notify the school of any changes in health conditions.

**Q. In Scenario 1 and Scenario 2, how will we address students and staff who are medically vulnerable and underlying health issues?**

A. Staff members should communicate with their administrators to seek guidance. Parents are asked to call the principal to speak personally about your child's diagnosis. Medical documentation may be required for both. We will work with parents of students with underlying health issues to develop a medical plan under the advice of a physician. The school nurse will ensure the action plan is followed and that all staff who work with the student are aware of the medical plan.

## **Parent Support & Partnerships**

**Q. Will the Boys and Girls Club be open?**

A. Please contact the Boys and Girls Club for information regarding their operations.

**Q. What can I do to help support the school?**

A. Continue to keep us informed of your child's changing health. Help us slow rumors by not reposting unsubstantiated information on social media. Please contact appropriate staff to address any concerns.