

Chippewa Valley board votes to bring students back to school

- By Nicole Tuttle For **The Macomb Daily**

Oct 3, 2020



Two weeks after parents, from left, Andrea Grillo-Deacon, Nicole Clyma, and Jenna Klepets protested the lack of face-to-face instruction in the Chippewa Valley Schools the district board decided to bring students back to buildings.

Macomb Daily file photo

By Don Gardner dgardner@medianewsgroup.com; [@skeeoos](https://twitter.com/skeeoos) on Twitter

School's back in for some students in Chippewa Valley Schools.

The Board of Education voted Oct. 1 to offer an in-person education option for grades K-5, Early Childhood Special Education and K-12 Creative Learning Plan students. The motion passed on a 6-1 vote.

The plan involves a hybrid model for K-5 students, and a traditional five-day per week model for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and K-12 Creative Learning Plan (CLP) students.

An Oct. 12 starting date has been targeted, with the exception of Clinton Valley Elementary School. The school, located in Mount Clemens, was quarantined on Sept. 30, according to school officials, and will reopen Oct. 19.

The board unanimously approved a motion that included revisions to the district's extended COVID-19 learning plan for the 2020-21 school year. It then approved 6-1 to allow an in-person instruction

option for students in grades K-5 following the hybrid model, and the ECSE and K-12 CLP students following a traditional model. Trustee Elizabeth Pyden voted against the measure.

Superintendent Ron Roberts said this was part of the district's commitment to return students to school when safe, and that if conditions changed a return to full remote learning would be possible. He also said the district would present a plan to the board during a Monday regular meeting regarding an in-person option hybrid plan for grades 6-12, with a target date of Nov. 4.

The board voted in early August for a remote education to begin the school year.

On Thursday during a virtual board meeting, the district's educational services team presented information on how the transition from remote learning for all students to offering an in-person hybrid learning model option would operate. Executive Director of Secondary Education Paul Sibley said the plan reflects the district's commitment to maximizing the amount of time students have with teachers in an in-person model while utilizing a safe amount of social distancing.

"This model also maximizes instructional time for our students based on our commitment to provide a full year of academic growth to our students," Sibley said.

Sibley explained K-5 students would be divided into Group A and Group B, attending school in person on alternating days Monday through Thursday. Group A and Group B will attend in-person school on alternating Fridays. Sibley said which of the two groups students belong to will be determined by address, permitting students that live together to attend school on the same days. He added this would also be helpful when secondary students are able to make a transition also.

"This would allow for a hybrid model at the middle school or high school model, it would keep siblings going to school on the same days. We also looked at transportation routes to make sure that our A and B groups made sense to allow for social distancing on school buses to the best of our ability. Finally we have also scheduled our classes proactively so that we were prepared for a hybrid model and could make our class sizes as appropriate as possible to allow for efficient social distancing upon our students' return," Sibley said.

He added when these students are not in the classrooms, they will be provided work allowing them to continue their education at home. The hybrid plan will not affect the district's virtual academy students, as they will continue to receive the full remote instruction.

“We will continue to monitor the local situation as we have planned for this return, and for a return for our other grade levels as well,” Sibley said.

The district’s full set of guidelines are posted at chippewavalleyschools.org.

Students will have lanyards to help them keep track of masks or specific bins to place them in when they need to be removed for eating or at recess.

Monica Licari, the district's elementary education executive director, used slides to illustrate some of the signs for buildings, indicating rules on masks, social distancing and hygiene.

“Students will be assigned to seats in the cafeteria with their cohort or with their classroom at the elementary level, and they will be seated, rather, in every other seat,” she said. “There will always be a seat that is off-limits if you will, or not to be used ring lunch time. So each of our cafeterias, some have round tables, some have square tables but seats will be designated for students so that they know exactly where to sit and the seats that need to be empty during lunch time.”

She indicated that in buildings without enough space to properly social distance at lunch, additional rooms can be used. Student desks will face in the same direction and will be designated for A or B group students, with students in assigned seats. Recess will be conducted with students remaining with classmates and playing in specified, rotated areas.

“With the support of our custodial staff and our custodial team obviously high touch areas are going to be cleaned throughout the school day and those procedures will be in place to ensure that our buildings are cleaned thoroughly throughout the day but also at night to prepare for the next group that will be entering the school building,” Licari said.

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Adam Blanchard discussed staffing plans. He said the district anticipates some leaves and retirements, but did not have a specific number available.

“One of the advantages of opening elementary first versus opening elementary and secondary is with the elementary we can utilize some of the staff that are at the secondary level that are in support roles when there are not students in the building and push them down into elementary in those critical needs areas,” Blanchard said.

Blanchard also said that should a teacher need to quarantine or is experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19, they could teach from home into the classroom via technology, and an adult would be present in the classroom to maintain order. He said this could decrease dependency on substitutes, but that the district has 40 subs. Blanchard also said that should a grade level or building need to quarantine, a switch to remote learning could easily be accomplished. Blanchard reviewed the process of contact tracing as well. Although the district currently has a part-time nurse, Blanchard said that a second, full-time nurse will be hired to maintain a COVID-19 hotline and serve as a liaison between the district and the Macomb County Health Department.