



WATERTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 14-4

Office of the Superintendent
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Dr. Jeff Danielsen
Superintendent
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Parents/ Guardians of Watertown School District:

First, let me thank you for your support and understanding as we, as a nation and community, responded to the unexpected invasion of COVID-19 in March. I am very proud of the way our students, parents, employees, and community leaders handled the demands we were faced with to protect everyone as we continued to educate and feed our students during the most unusual of circumstances.

We know there are many questions related to how schools plan to reopen in August 2020. While we are in the business of educating, our first priority is the safety of our students and our employees. Based on the developmental, education, social, and emotional needs of students, [the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school. We have been working diligently on our plan to restart school. We have gathered input from parents, employees, community representatives, administrators, state leaders, the South Dakota Department of Education and medical professionals through ongoing communications and a task force.

The intent of the Watertown School District is to return to school with enhanced safety and cleaning procedures and increased attention to the social and emotional needs of our students. As factors and information change we must be proactive and prepared to continue educating our students if and when circumstances change.

We are working on three scenarios, with safety at the forefront of each:

1. Onsite – In Person: We would continue school as normal with enhanced safety precautions in place such as increased hand sanitizer availability, increased frequency of cleaning, and monitoring high-traffic spaces. At this time masking will not be required, but highly encouraged. COVID-19 is evolving and circumstances may change, requiring additional restrictions.

In preparation of this plan we are requiring all students to pre-register via this link as soon as possible, by July 24th at the latest: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGsm2XxQw1kPSlygzknu-7CFTnQs8Tiun3xZr_fI8EYnuIVQ/viewform?usp=sf_link. This will allow us to better meet the needs of medically compromised students and families with a higher risk of severe illness.

The Watertown School District intends to continue providing daily bus transportation. Families should be aware that social distancing is not possible on our busses. Drivers will wear masks with masks optional for students at this time. Sanitizing and cleaning procedures will be implemented. If you are uncomfortable with the bus situation as explained, we advise you to transport your child.

2. Hybrid Plan: This would be a combination of distance and face-to-face instruction with increased safety and disinfecting measures as listed above, which could be done in a variety of configurations. This plan would only be enacted if state and local mandates require the maintenance of a six feet social distance to limit the number of people in groups.

3. Online/Distance Learning Plan: All students would participate in the learning of new material, continued standard pacing, interactive lessons, graded assignments, and assessments. There would be higher expectations for student engagement and accountability than there was this spring. This scenario would be enacted if it is necessary to close schools again. If we have outbreaks of COVID-19 in specific schools, we may enact individual school closures instead of district wide closures.

We will continue to communicate regularly. Our priority is to keep everyone safe, knowing each family situation is uniquely different. We fully understand your varied concerns about health and safety, your child's learning and method of instruction, parents needing to work, and the economy.

Thank you for your continued support and positivity as we strive to do what is best for ALL of our students and employees during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Danielsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Dr. Jeff Danielsen
Superintendent