

**October 13, 2020
Press Release**



Middleton trustees approve plan to bring all students back for in-person learning, starting October 26; masks ‘will be’ required when social distancing can’t be achieved

Middleton School District will resume in-person learning for all students within a month.

The Middleton Board of Trustees rejected the recommendation provided by Superintendent Kristin Beck that included a staggered approach to return students to the district at the end of each respective grading term, beginning with Middleton Academy on October 26th, and ending with Middleton High School, and the developmental preschool at the end of the semester, December 17th.

Superintendent Beck’s recommendation also included the caveat that students would only return to school if the district continued to see a trend of COVID-19 transmission levels that were low in the schools, and incident rate by census tract, as well as incident rate by school district, continued to earn scores of less than 3.0.

Instead, trustees moved to adopt, 5-0, their own version of a modified reopening plan after reviewing written testimony, both for and against returning students to school full time. Students in K-5 and Middleton Academy will return to the classroom full-time for face-to-face learning on October 26. Three weeks later, on November 16, middle school and high school students will go full time. This will be a natural break for middle school students at the end of the trimester. High school students will be moved back to the classroom full time prior to their scheduled end of term at the semester. Written testimony may be found and reviewed in Simbli. Currently, students are in class for two days (Monday-Tuesday or Wednesday-Thursday) and complete school work in virtual settings on their off days.

Educators submitted letters expressing concerns about opening schools to full capacity.

Middleton Association President Dave Stacy said the group objects to the fact that the board did not seek the association’s input when the board modified the plan.

“Trustees, please include the MEA in the discussions of modifying the reopening plan,” Stacy’s letter said. “Show that you are supportive and concerned for our staff who are doing everything imaginable to continue the quality educational experience that Middleton is known for.”

Southwest District Health representative, Kimberly Beckley, RN was available during a work session prior to the meeting where CDC guidelines and local trends were reviewed. The work session started at 5:00 PM.

“The one thing that I just want to emphasize for both myself and the district is that we too, are very excited to get students back in school, and that is a priority of ours,” Beck told the trustees.

“I think there's only one thing that we would prioritize over the top of that, and that is the health and safety of our students and our staff and that is what we are really trying to be cognizant of.”

Beck’s recommendation to the board also included a face covering mandate since students will no longer be able to socially distance in classrooms as they can now at half capacity. The board opposed a mandate, stating that the language in the reopening plan was enough. The language in the reopening plan has been amended to include the following: “From time to time, while COVID-19 transmission is a concern, and schools are operating at full capacity, the board may mandate face coverings. During such time, face coverings will be required any time students are not socially distanced, and not at designated periods for recess and/or lunch.”

Trustee chairman Kirk Adams said “masks WILL be required. You can’t open the schools without masks being required.”

Although trustees agreed that from time to time, when COVID-19 spread is a concern, schools operating at full capacity may require face coverings if students can’t socially distance for more than 15 minutes, they did not implement a mandate that would make this a requirement for the district.

Adams said the board will address the mask issue if necessary.

Trustees also agreed to provide Plexiglass to teachers who want it.

After the meeting Beck stated that she is concerned about returning students at full capacity sooner than recommended. The plan that was recommended to trustees had input from school leaders, teacher leaders, and district administration, and included a timeline that would allow the district to continue to assess trends for a longer period of time with more time between each group of students returning to school.

“My fear is that the move to return students to school too fast or too soon will accelerate our path to closing schools due to rising COVID-19 transmission levels within the school buildings,” Beck said.

Trustee Adams said today that he understands those fears, but he said the board needs to balance Beck’s concerns and those of the teachers, with what the patrons have voiced and move forward.

The board recognizes, Adams said, that if COVID numbers increase, the board will need to move the district to the red category and full distance learning.

The district still needs to fill several vacancies. Those vacancies include the following, and can be found on the Middleton School District website:

- Middleton High School (2) English/Language Arts Teachers
- Middleton High School (1) Science Teacher
- Middleton High School (2) Licenced Behavioral Interventionists
- Middleton High School (1) 1:1 Educational Assistant
- Middleton High School (1) Extended Resource Room Educational Assistant
- Middleton Academy (.5) Educational Assistant
- Middleton Middle School (1) English/Language Arts Teacher
- Middleton Middle School (1) Math Teacher
- Middleton Middle School (1) Social Studies Teacher
- Middleton Middle School (1) Attendance Secretary
- Middleton Middle School (2) 1:1 Educational Assistants
- Purple Sage Elementary (1) 2nd Grade Teacher
- Purple Sage Elementary (1) Extended Resource Room Educational Assistant
- Purple Sage Elementary (1.5) Pre-K Educational Assistant
- Heights Elementary (2) 1:1 Educational Assistant
- District (.5) Licenced School Nurse
- District (1) Licenced Medical Assistant
- District (1) Level II Technology

Important links:

- [View board documents, including the reopening plan](#)
- [Watch the YouTube recording of Monday’s meeting](#)
- [Read the public comments regarding the reopening plan](#)