

August 7, 2020

Hello, Orono Intermediate School Families!

I am so excited to welcome your family to the 2020-21 school year. We have been working very hard to develop plans to re-open safely and with the best interests of students and our entire learning community in mind.

We know you have a lot of questions as we approach the beginning of the year. Many are answered here, and others will be answered as soon as we know more about each family's preferred instructional model. Thank you for your patience and please continue to look for communication from the school, the district office and the district website.

The following is a list of questions that I have received from many of you over the past few days:

When will I know my student's class assignment? *Schedules and teacher assignments will be viewable at 4:00 PM on August 26th.*

Will my child still receive specials? *Yes. We are currently working on a model that allows specialists to rotate through classrooms. However, this will look different than it has in the past. In this model, a certain specialist will be visiting your child's class every day for several weeks, rather than students visiting the specialists once per week. This was the only way we could ensure that students received specials while we maintained smaller groups and less teacher/student movement and interaction.*

Will my child be required to wear a mask at school? *Yes. The Governor's mask mandate requires that all students wear masks during the school day. Exceptions to this will be when they are eating and when they are engaged in outdoor activities that allow them to socially distance.*

How will the companion classroom work? *Some classrooms will be split in half and reside in two classrooms in close proximity to each other. Both groups will be taught by a core teacher and supported by another IS staff member. The teachers and support personnel will travel between the two classrooms over the course of the day to deliver content and assist in overseeing and reinforcing the learning. There will also be an option for the teacher to teach a lesson in one classroom and live stream it to the companion classroom when appropriate or necessary. When live streaming, students will be able to watch the teacher on either the big screen or on their laptops. We are currently working on each grade level having a consistent class structure.*

How will the 5th-grade classroom am/pm teacher work this year? *Fifth-grade hybrid students will continue to have two teachers (language arts/social studies & math/science). Students will remain with the same cohort of students in the same space while the two teachers switch rooms. For 5th grade families that choose the distance learning option, the teacher will teach all four core subject areas.*

What about band and choir? *This is currently a work in progress but for now our band teacher, Mr. Twernbold, will continue to provide instruction via on-demand videos and weekly communications. Full band practice and small lessons are on hold for this year unless the MDH and CDC guidelines and recommendations change. Continue to look for specific emails from Mr.*

T. We are currently looking at different options for choir with Ms. McCauley. More information coming.

If my child has to stay home for a period of time due to a COVID exposure, how will you ensure that their learning is not disrupted? *In the event of a longer than usual absence from school, your child will have the opportunity to join the distance learning classroom for the period of time that they are gone. The content for this classroom will be in sequence with their in-school classroom. In the event that an entire class is required to be out of school, the class as a whole can shift into the distance learning model with their regular core teacher leading the instruction.*

Will my child have recess? *Yes. Every child will still have recess every day. We will be utilizing all of our outdoor spaces (front lawn, recess field, high school fields, nature center, and/or track) in order to ensure that classes have enough space to socially distance and remain with their core class. At this point, the playground equipment will not be used due to sanitation requirements. In addition to recess, core teachers and specialists are encouraged to use our outdoor space throughout the day for additional instructional and play opportunities when weather permits.*

Will students have field trips this year? *As of now, we are not scheduling any field trips including Camp Ihduhapi due to the difficulty in ensuring social distancing on buses and in group activities.*

Where will my child eat lunch? *All students will eat lunch in their classroom under the supervision of their core teacher and/or supporting personnel. Students still have the option to bring their own lunches to school or to eat a school lunch which will likely be delivered to classrooms. The school lunch option and milk will be available from Orono Food Services. Meal prices will remain the same as last year and meal payments can be made on [MyPaymentsPlus](#).*

Are visitors allowed in the building? *Unfortunately, we will not be allowing visitors to the school at this time. This means parents will not have the opportunity to volunteer in classrooms, eat lunch with their child, come into the building for drop off and pick up, etc. We recognize that this runs contrary to our normal priority of family involvement and community connectedness. We look forward to the time in the future when we can open our doors to all families again.*

Will arrival and departure times be staggered to avoid crowding in the hallways? *We are currently looking at models that would minimize the traffic flow in the morning and afternoon. This may include extending the arrival time, assigning specific entrances/exits to classrooms or grade levels, and upgrading our afternoon pick-up model now that the backside of OIS has been redesigned. More information to come on this in the near future.*

How will the distance learning option be the same and/or different from this past spring? *The distance learning instructional model will still use Schoology as the main platform for delivering activities & assignments. Students will also be connecting via live stream with their teachers and classmates each day for core content lessons and social/emotional check-ins.*

Can I change my child's learning model after the start of the school year? *Parents and students are asked to commit to either the hybrid or distance learning model for at least the first semester. We recognize that health guidelines, virus case rates, and individual health may necessitate more students in a distance learning model as the school year progresses. We will be*

able to accommodate students who shift from hybrid to distance learning but will have limited capacity to allow students who choose distance learning to shift back to the hybrid model. We will reevaluate this and communicate with you as guidance and conditions evolve.

What about school supplies? *School supply lists will be similar to previous years (the list will be sent soon and posted on our website). As always, you will have the option of buying the supplies on your own or ordering a pre-packaged kit. In the past, many of the supplies were combined and used communally in the classroom. This year, students will keep and use their own personal supplies. Therefore we ask that you label all supplies with your child's name.*

Additional Questions?

Please visit the district's [Back-to-School Options webpage](#) for links to the 2020-21 learning models, FAQs and Health & Safety document, and messages from Dr. Orcutt.

As we enter this new year, please know we will be communicating with you often as we clarify our new health procedures and student procedures. I am eager to work with your students again and I can assure you that the Orono Intermediate School staff is doing everything possible to ensure that all students have an enriching, fun and safe school year.

Warm Regards,

Mary Jodl
Principal, Orono Intermediate School

