

July 27, 2020

Dear Prairie Families,

I hope this message finds you well. A lot has changed since I wrote to you a few weeks ago. [Racine's COVID cases](#) were trending in the right direction as recently as 7/12 (with only three new cases in our health department's jurisdiction) before the city saw a brief spike mid-month. However, this past Thursday (7/23) Racine reported just four new cases. Obviously, it is unclear what the weeks ahead will bring, and while our goal continues to be starting the school year on campus on Tuesday, August 18th, *it is possible that the plans I am sharing today will change over the next three weeks. We will share an update on or before Friday, August 7th.*

Our plan to successfully open school and remain open relies heavily on your family's ability to reduce contacts and risk factors outside of school, to carefully monitor your family's health, and to proactively communicate with everyone here at Prairie. It is clear that the most important factor in keeping our students and teachers safe has nothing to do with what's happening at Prairie; it is what we are all doing in the community to reduce the spread of infection. Remember the three Ws:

- wear a mask,
- wash your hands, and
- watch your distance.

I have, and perhaps you have, told our children at some point to "toughen up," and then sent them to school when they are not feeling well, because I had an important meeting, I thought they were exaggerating, or for some other reason. Those days of sending children to school when they are not feeling well are over. **You must keep your children home from school and contact their doctor anytime your child has unexplained symptoms of illness or a temperature above 100.3°F.**

To reiterate: your child's health is your responsibility and our whole community is counting on you. You must check your own and your child's condition every morning before school. If you or they are ill, you need to seek professional medical advice. If we each are able to slow down every morning and check on our families, our whole school will benefit.

I believe that if we follow this plan and behave safely outside of school, we will continue learning on campus, but our plan is fragile. If people get sick and infections begin to spread here at Prairie, we will all be learning from home.

We have spent countless hours researching and consulting experts and the entire month of July working through the details with our day camps. A key part of our plan is that masks must be worn, covering both our mouths and noses, by everyone indoors. There is now [clear research](#) ¹²³⁴ that masks are effective. Our students are adaptable and our own experiences this summer at day camp, along with those of our friends in Asia, have shown that students of all ages will wear masks appropriately. We will make this work.

To date, slightly more than one percent of students (7 individuals across 5 grades) have requested a separate distance learning program. Because that is not a critical mass, we will not be offering a totally separate modality. All Middle and Upper School classes will be broadcast for students at home and Primary School students who are at home will be able to follow the curriculum using our learning management system. All students learning remotely will periodically check in with their teachers.

Here are the vast majority of the details of our plan, as well as as our guiding principles. I know this is a lot to digest, particularly with the pandemic's current uncertainty. If the spring semester showed us anything, it's that we are truly #BetterTogether and we can and will adapt.

The faculty will be ready and if we rely on each other, we will make it a successful fall semester. I have no doubt our community will rise to the challenge and do everything in our power to help Prairie's students and teachers safely keep learning and growing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nat Coffman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nathaniel W. Coffman Ed.D.
Head of School and President