

WIN-E-MAC SCHOOL DISTRICT

RANDY BRUER, SUPERINTENDENT

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COVID19 NUMBER ROCKETS TODAY

Keeping the WEM School Doors Open: Working Together Has Never Been More Important

Despite the fact that school looks different for students and staff, we've been fortunate at Win-E-Mac that we've been able to maintain in person learning for as long as we have. We have nearly made it through Quarter 1! We've had only two reported cases *in* our schools; we've had to quarantine people, but we've been able to isolate the illness. Within our walls, we've not seen widespread outbreaks.... yet. Staff and students have been working hard to implement layers of strategies -- including observing physical distances, wearing a mask, diligent hand-washing, and staying home when sick. Families have been doing a great job screening for symptoms at home and notifying the school when their children are ill. These things have been **key** to keeping our doors open.

Our goal, as educators, is to have as many students on site for as long as possible. It's important for their learning academically and socially. It's important for their mental and physical well-being. It's important for their futures. It's also important for their families to have their children back in school. Parents need to work and there isn't enough childcare in the area to absorb all of our elementary students if they are not in school. And it's important for society as a whole that children remain in school.

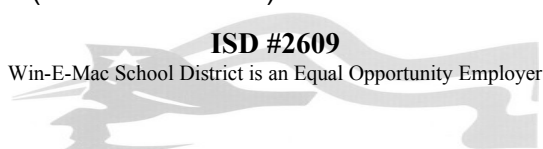
The rising COVID19 case numbers county wide is concerning as of today. Public Health officials have noted that some of the spread is linked to events (weddings...parties) where large numbers of people are together, indoors, and not maintaining distance. We've been working closely with Polk County Public Health to monitor our **local** data and to make **local** decisions based on that data. And at this point, the recommendation from Polk County Public Health and our own COVID team is to continue with our current learning model for as long as we possibly can. And we need our community's help.

We know that adults are more susceptible to the virus, and can have more severe complications, depending on their age and underlying health conditions. Our bus drivers are in a category that is higher risk for COVID19 complications, and right now, there is a shortage of bus drivers (true all over the region). If our drivers get sick, we may not be able to transport students to and from school. Our custodians, our para-educators, our secretaries, our cooks, our coaches and teachers are all adults, which makes them more susceptible to the virus. Many staff members have compromised immune systems or live with or take care of someone that has a compromised immune system. Some of our staff have newborns at home and are worried about bringing COVID19 home to their infants. Some of our staff are in an age category that makes them more susceptible to complications from COVID19. There are shortages of qualified substitute workers all over the state, and the pandemic will make that greater. If our staff becomes ill with COVID19, we may not have enough adults available to safely keep school open. Staff are working incredibly hard to keep our schools open and our students safe...and we need your help to continue to keep our students safe and in school.

If we all take some simple precautions, we can slow the spread of COVID19, and we can minimize risks. This is where working together comes in. Maintaining 6 feet of separation between people not from your household helps. Frequent hand washing and sanitizing of areas helps slow the spread. We emphasize these at school. Wearing a mask has been shown to help slow the spread, if enough people do so. The Governor of Minnesota has ordered it, and we abide by that rule in school. Not simply because the governor ordered it, but because it will help us keep our doors open to students. Health screenings and staying home when sick have also shown to help slow the spread of COVID19 (and other viruses).

ISD #2609

Win-E-Mac School District is an Equal Opportunity Employer



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Here's how you can help keep schools open this year. Try to keep 6 feet of distance between your household members and those outside your house. Consider avoiding large gatherings for a while. Wear a mask. Send your students to school with a mask, every day -- an extra one for elementary students is important also, as their masks become soiled when they come in from outside and their noses run. Encourage hand washing at home and at school. Continue to screen/track your children at home. *Please* keep your children home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

We are committed to working with our families. We want to keep children in school. **If the rising infection rate has you concerned, you can opt for distance learning. Please call the school and ask us directly if you have questions or concerns.** We are part of the same community, and we have a common goal that centers around the well-being of children in this community. Please help us to keep our staff healthy, so that we can continue to teach your children.

Randy Bruer, Superintendent

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