



August 7, 2020

NLCS Parents & Guardians,

As you are well aware, schools are facing tough decisions as the weeks and days tick down closer to having to return to school. After being told by the MN Department of Education in March of last school year that all schools were required to close and use a Distance Learning model due to the COVID-19 outbreak, MDE is now saying that due to low incidents of COVID in Itasca County, schools in this area are allowed to return to 100% normal operations and have kids in school until there are enough cases that they would be required to go to hybrid learning or even back to Distance Learning.

The NLCS School Board met in a special session on 8/6/2020 and the decision was made to take a cautious “wait and see” approach to the start of the school year instead of jumping headfirst back into the deep end. NLCS will start the school year on August 24th, 2020, in Distance Learning mode with the goal to return students to school as soon as it is safe to do so – preferably by early November. We may transition to a hybrid model at that time, or we may go back full-time if the conditions allow for it.

We recognize that this is not the most convenient mode of schooling for working parents and will be an added burden and stress for some families. We also recognize that this is not what is best for our students academically and emotionally, but at this time there are too many unknown risk factors, and a rising rate of infection in this area, that even if we did go back to school full-time we would most likely have to shift to some form of Distance Learning fairly soon after opening in the fall. Our mission is to provide a safe learning environment for our students and staff and we do not feel that we can do that on August 24th.

Now that a decision has been made, the NLCS staff will be meeting earlier than our anticipated August 18th staff return date to plan for a more rigorous and supportive Distance Learning experience than what was provided at the end of the school year. Our goal is to ensure that Quarter 1 Distance Learning this next year is nothing like Quarter 4 was last year. The previous experience worked under the circumstances we were dealing with. Now, we will be promoting a daily home schedule that mimics what a student would be doing at school had they been allowed to return to the building.

Families of returning students who filled out an intent to return at the end of the year are asked to complete the paperwork we are sending home to finalize enrollment for 2020-21. If you have any questions about any of the paperwork, please call the office.

Advisors will be contacting their students concerning “schedules” and expectations starting the week of August 18th – after we finalize our Distance Learning plans.

Each student will be issued a Chromebook for use at home (if you didn’t keep one from last year) and we will work with families to make sure students have access to the internet.

Lastly, we will be providing daily, free meals (breakfast and lunch) to students who would like to take advantage of this option. As before, meals will be delivered in the mornings and we may shift to a once-a-week delivery as time goes by and needs change.

We thank you for choosing Northern Lights Community School to educate your student(s), and we appreciate your patience and support as we all work together to make sure we get through this difficult period as illness/injury free as possible. We will do everything we can to work towards a return to full-time school – and it will happen. For now, we choose to let caution prevail and will begin 2020-21 in Distance Learning mode.

As always, please call or email if you have any questions. (218)492-4400 or Mike.Hamernick@nlcschool.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike D. Hamernick", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike D. Hamernick
Director – Northern Lights Community School