



# Smart Restart Update

9.21.2020

Fargo Public Schools Staff, Families, and Community,

On September 21, the Fargo Public Schools (FPS) COVID-19 Instructional Plan Committee met to decide the Instructional Level for our schools, in accordance to the [FPS Smart Restart Plan](#). **After thoughtful deliberation, the committee determined to operate Fargo Public Schools under the following levels from October 5 through October 19:**

*Elementary Schools:* **Level 3 – Hybrid Instruction**

*Middle Schools:* **Level 2 – Distance Learning**

*High Schools:* **Level 2 – Distance Learning**

This decision was made based on the guiding principles outlined in the FPS Smart Restart Plan. Specific criteria used to help make this determination included, but are not limited to: guidance from the state, guidance from Fargo Cass Public Health, Cass County COVID-19 death rate, Cass County COVID-19 hospitalization rate, Cass County COVID-19 transmission rate, FPS student data of COVID-19 related absences, FPS staff leave data, FPS substitute fill rate data, considerations to the implementation of the FPS Smart Restart Plan and the recently released [CDC indicators and thresholds for risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in schools](#). When considering specific Cass County data, a 14-day rolling average of COVID-19 cases was used.

FPS staff members will take the next two weeks to prepare for distance learning instruction for middle and high school students. While change is difficult, the change in the Instructional Plan Level for our middle and high school students follows the model based on a 14-day rolling average of COVID-19 cases adopted by the committee and will hopefully help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. The committee will continue to utilize the model, guidance from local health care providers, research, and other data for future decisions on the Instructional Plan Level for all grade levels.

***The goal of the Fargo Public Schools COVID-19 Instructional Plan Committee is to help Fargo Public Schools reach Level 5, where all students and staff can safely return to in-person instruction.*** At their next meeting on October 5, the FPS COVID-19 Instructional Plan Committee will begin discussing a phased-in approach for elementary in-person instruction starting October 19. Between now and then, Fargo Public Schools will continue to work with Fargo Cass Public Health to determine the conditions required to provide in-person instruction for elementary students beginning October 19. If Fargo Public Schools is able to employ those conditions and the committee feels that the precautionary measures in place with



the number of cases in our community warrants in-person instruction, that decision will be made on October 5 for implementation on October 19. The FPS COVID-19 Instructional Plan Committee will consider a phased-in approach to in-person instruction for elementary students even if the model shows otherwise. This would be based on a lower positivity rate for elementary students in our community and based on additional mitigation strategies which would lessen the number of identified close contacts in elementary schools.

Between now and October 5, Fargo Public Schools will continue to work with Fargo Cass Public Health to determine the conditions required to provide in-person instruction for secondary students. If Fargo Public Schools is able to employ those conditions and the committee feels that the precautionary measures in place with the number of cases in our community warrants hybrid or in-person instruction, that decision will be made on October 5 for implementation on October 19.

The committee will work to provide at least a two-week notice prior to making a change in Level for Fargo Public Schools. However, due the changing data and the ability for the number of COVID-19 cases in our community to suddenly increase or decrease, sometimes a two-week notice may not be feasible. The members of the FPS COVID-19 Instructional Plan Committee are committed to meeting every two weeks, reviewing COVID-19 specific data in Cass County and making the best decision for Fargo Public Schools.

Thank you for your continued understanding as we seek to achieve Fargo Public Schools' mission of educating and empowering all students to succeed during this pandemic. We will continue to navigate these uncharted waters together as an FPS family.

Sincerely,

Rupak Gandhi, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

