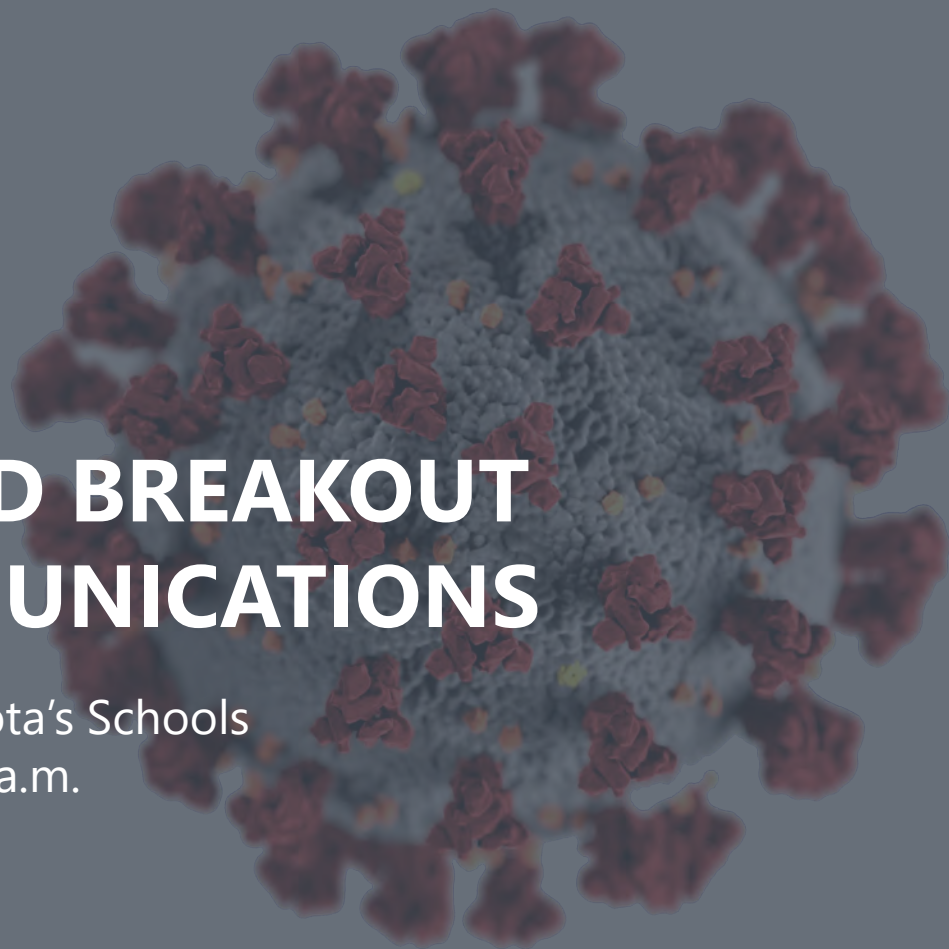




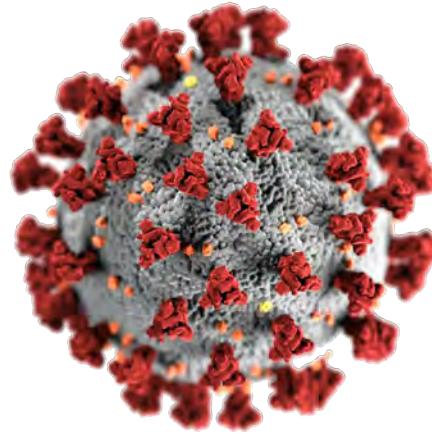
# **READY, SET, COVID BREAKOUT SESSIONS: COMMUNICATIONS**

A Playbook for Reopening Minnesota's Schools  
July 20, 2020 from 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.



# Introduction: Arif Quraishi

- What do we know now? What's changed?
- The “why” behind the playbook
- Webinar and speaker(s) introduction
- Breakout session content
- Q&A



# Disclaimer:

**This presentation is for general educational purposes only and is not intended as neither legal or medical advice or as a substitute for the advice of your own legal counsel, physician, business, or health and safety professional.**

**The following slides are based on interpretations of local, state, and national resources as well as derived from the expertise of our task force.**





# Managing COVID-19 During the 2020-21 School Year

TODD RAPP, CEO  
RAPP STRATEGIES

A young girl with dark hair tied back, wearing a white surgical-style face mask and a dark blue long-sleeved shirt. She is carrying a white backpack and holding a brown folder or book against her chest. The background is a blurred outdoor school setting with other students and greenery.

**READY, SET,  
COMMUNICATE!**



**RAPP STRATEGIES**

# Guidance Part 1: Requirements

Informed  
by CDC  
Guidance

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

STAY SAFE MN

## 2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools

Most  
applies to  
Scenarios  
1 & 2

**“Required** health practices must be implemented by all Minnesota public schools. These practices are foundational to minimizing the risks of exposure to COVID-19 for students, staff, and families. These practices are considered the minimum level of implementation, and schools may not be less restrictive.”



RAPP STRATEGIES

| SLIDE 5



# Guidance Part 2: Recommendations

**Minnesota  
Department  
of Education**



**Minnesota  
Department  
of Health**



"Recommended health practices are additional strategies that schools may choose to use to minimize the spread of COVID-19. MDH and MDE recognize there are diverse learning environments that will require teams to use thoughtful strategies when applying guidance to meet the health and safety needs of all students and staff. Not all recommended practices will be possible in all settings, and therefore should be tailored as appropriate."

**Other sources include: Minnesota School Boards Association, National Education Association, Harvard School of Public Health, The School Superintendents Association, Minnesota Rural Education Association, etc.**



# Guidance

## Part 3: Experience and Common Sense





# Three Different Scenarios to Prepare For

	Communications Challenges	Within Buildings	Outreach to Parents
Scenario 1: In-person	Not knowing if/when disruption starts	Creating a sense of normalcy in a socially distant atmosphere	Daily concern about continued best health practices
Scenario 2: Hybrid	Needs greatest effort: two plans wrapped in one	Using in-school days to address individual student needs	Understanding their roles when children are home
Scenario 3: Distance Learning	Determining that all students are engaging	Preparing for return to buildings (if possible)	How this year's model is better than last spring





# MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS



# Requirement: Points of Contact

## What MDH Requires:

“COVID-19 program coordinator – Identify a point of contact for each school building in collaboration with building or district school nurses. This person will communicate concerns, challenges, and lessons learned related to COVID-19 preventive activities as needed with staff, students/families, school and district leadership, and local health officials.

“Designate a staff person who will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse) and will help coordinate with local health authorities regarding positive COVID-19 cases. All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.”



## Implementation

- **Implies two different people**
- **Full-time person preferred, in-building**
- **Give them freedom to offer criticism and improvement**
- **Have back-ups ready**



# Requirement: Hygiene

## What MDH Requires:

“Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older students.”



## Implementation

- **Expectation that educators lead this communication**
- **Other hygiene recommendations (e.g. masks, 6 foot rule) imply further communications**

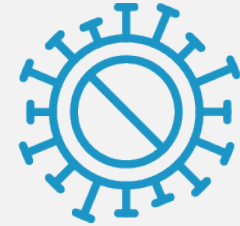


# Requirement: Signage

## What MDH Requires:

“Post signage at main entrance(s) requesting that people who have been symptomatic not enter the building.

“Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and other times they may congregate (e.g. during lunch, arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker rooms, etc.).”



## Implementation

- **Prominent signage to promote other health etiquette steps is also recommended**
- **Implies that screening questions may be necessary at these entrances**



# Requirement: Discovery

## What MDH Requires:

“Educate staff, students and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and when they/their children should stay home and when they can return to school.

“Communicate expectations and processes for the symptom screening method(s) selected for staff, students, and families.

“Put systems in place to allow staff and families to self-report to the school if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or had a close exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in a manner that is consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).”



## Implementation

- **Proactively encourage understanding of symptoms**
- **Transparency in screening processes (both initial and adaptations)**
- **Encourage a safe way to self-report**



# Requirement: Notification

## What MDH Requires:

“Notify MDH of confirmed COVID-19 cases among students and staff (as required by Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4605.7050). An MDH inbox has been established for school COVID case reporting: [health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us](mailto:health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us).

“Develop systems for notifying staff, families, and the public as needed if a person with COVID-19 was on the school premises while infectious. Do this in coordination with local health officials while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and all other state and federal laws.”



## Implementation

- **Two separate protocols for communicating cases**
- **Confidentiality laws don't change during pandemic**
- **Have a Q&A ready to use**



# Requirement: Self Identification of Risk

## What MDH Requires:

“Create a process for students/families and staff to self-identify as high risk for illness due to COVID-19. Have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work reassignments.

“Are you 65 years and older?

“Have underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well-controlled, including:

- Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Compromised immune system
- Severe obesity (body mass index of 40 or higher)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease
- Hemoglobin disorder”



## Implementation

- **Requirement is to create and communicate this process**
- **ADA-guided**
- **Cannot ask individual employees**
- **Consult your attorney**





# Requirement: Ongoing Engagement

## What MDH Requires:

“Develop strategies to maintain engagement and offer distance learning activities for students who cannot be physically present in the classroom due to illness or exposure.”



## Implementation

- **Intended to address needs within individual cases**
- **Implies that daily lessons are not sufficient to meet MDH expectations**



# Requirement: Additional Support

## What MDH Requires:

“Provide staff, families, and students (age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness.”



## Implementation

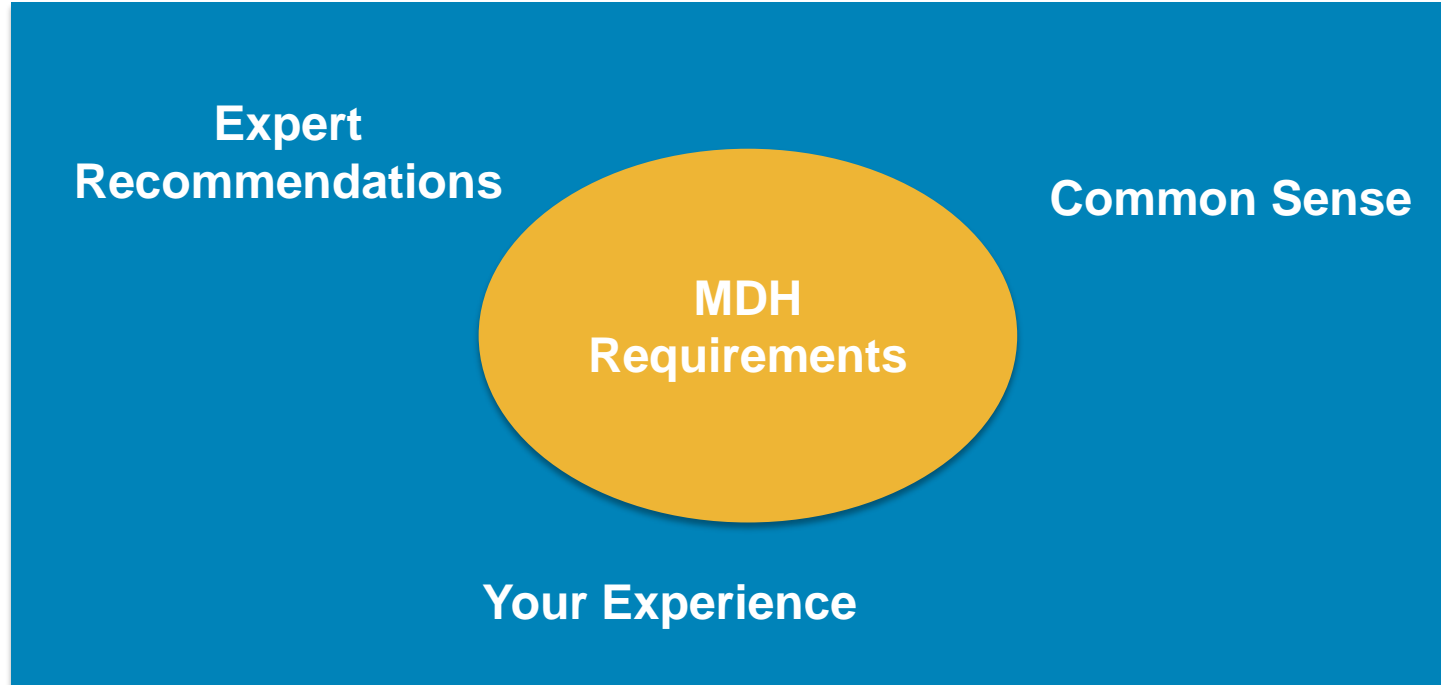
- **Work with local health professionals to identify appropriate resources**
- **Prepare a separate protocol for use if positive cases are discovered**



# BUILDING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



# Your COVID-19 Communication Plan



# 1. Complete Your Assessment of 2019-20

- What can we learn from how we navigated the challenges and disruptions?
- What lessons can be applied from how other school districts or organizations responded to COVID-19?
- Where did our schools respond well?
- How could school leaders have improved?
- Were there any failures? If so, what can be remedied?
- What questions did we hear most frequently?



# 2. Identify Your Stakeholders

Tier 0:	School Board Members	
Tier 1:	Staff Students Families	Administrators Program Users Local Health Professionals
Tier 2:	Local Media City, County and Township Leaders Community Organizations	



# How Do You Know What to Communicate to Stakeholders?

## Information

- What do they need to know?
- What will help each group understand the school district's decisions?
- Where can they get more information?
- How often do you want to reach them?

## Engagement

- What do you need to learn from them?
- What else do they want to know?
- What actions are you asking them to take?
- How should they help determine what “success” looks like?

## What MDH Recommends:

*With older students, consider a counterpart(s) to the COVID-19 program coordinator role to reflect the student experience. This strategy can support student ownership and responsibility for creating a safe and healthy school environment.*





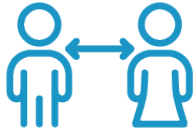
### 3. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

- This is a new world for everyone
- Uncertainty + fear = easy breakdown of communications
- If cases emerge in your district or region, attention to messages will increase
- Lack of consistency in messages will inhibit successful operations



### 3. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

## Three Key MN Dept. of Health Recommendations



“Provide frequent reminders for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart for one another when feasible.”



“Share information with staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings and face shields.”



“Use media, posters, and other tactics to promote health etiquette expectations in highly visible locations.”

# Sample Stakeholder Communication Plan

<u>Day</u>	<u>Week One</u>	<u>Week Two</u>
<b>Sunday Night/Monday</b>	Start of week email – parents Student announcements	Start of week email – parents Student announcements Update calls – local media
<b>Tuesday</b>	Email about COVID learning – Staff Meeting – administrators	Email about COVID learning – Staff Calls – school board Meeting – administrators
<b>Wednesday</b>	Outreach calls – local health Zoom call – community leaders	Outreach calls – local health Update email – program users
<b>Thursday</b>	Meeting – staff Calls – local elected officials	Meeting – staff Calls – other local elected officials
<b>Friday</b>	Prep email for next week – Staff Update email – school board	Prep email for next week – Staff Update email – school board



## 4. Enforce Organizational Discipline

### WHO

- Best communicators
- Intended audiences

### WHAT

- Clear messages
- Appropriate level of concern

### WHEN

- Timed to maximize attention

### (every)WHERE

- Don't assume all stakeholders view the same media



## 5. Message Using The Best Facts and Data

- No speculation
- No promises
- No predictions
- No false expectations

Optimism can ease concern and build trust in district leaders. However, the path of this pandemic is unknown, and district stakeholders must be ready for any scenario that may emerge.



## 6. Encourage Holistic Health Practices

- Emotional and mental health are often most ignored during a crisis
- Consider ways to adapt classroom environments and daily activities to provide needed physical activities
- Staff and student leaders can support those asking for additional services





# 7. Answer Questions Quickly and Clearly

- 24-hour rule
- Follow-up to assure that response are understood
- Use repeated questions to inform topics for future communications
- Use third-party expert sources (such as CDC or MDH)

“I don’t know – but I will find out and get back to you.”





## 8. Seek Feedback

- You are in uncharted territory – feedback becomes a critical part of knowing whether you are hitting the mark
- Frequent, short surveys for staff, parents and students
- Reach into Tier 2 stakeholders for input



**Acknowledge What You Hear. And Learn From It.**



## 9. Prepare for the Worst Moments

- A significant outbreak
- A fatality
- A second type of virus
- Education gaps are exposed
- Budget shortfalls
- Your own mistakes

**You can't predict every potential problem.**

**However, you can prepare for the types of issues that have already occurred in other critical service industries.**



# 10. Don't Ignore Your Successes

Have you shared ...

- Effectively managing the challenge of pandemic learning?
- Educational achievements?
- Individual awards or accolades?
- Unique stories about teacher and student success?
- The latest example of a staff member going beyond the expected?



# Summary

1. Start your plan with MDH requirements
2. Solidify plan with recommendations, experience and common sense
3. Use stakeholders to assess and improve plan
4. Remember that everyone is in this for the first time
5. Watch for new and changing guidance



# Next Steps

- PowerPoint slides, webinar recordings, and more are available on our [website](#) and more will be available in the coming months
- **Monthly updates through December from districts discussing reopening schools topics including:**
  - Challenges of reopening
  - What's gone well?
  - What hasn't gone well?
  - What processes have been implemented?
  - How has your plan changed?
  - Any lessons learned?
- Combined links/resources available at the end of the presentation



# QUESTIONS?

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