

# Chippewa Valley officials consider future of learning plan

- By Nicole Tuttle For **The Macomb Daily**
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Ron Roberts

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Chippewa Valley Schools administrators and board members Monday assured parents anxious for an in-person school option that remote start will be reevaluated soon.

The district, the county's second largest school system, started the school year with remote learning on Sept. 8, joining Utica and Warren Consolidated, the biggest and third biggest Macomb districts, respectively, in online only learning.

During Monday's virtual Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Ron Roberts said that an administrative leadership team has begun to discuss moving the district towards an in-person option, with additional work scheduled for the week of Sept. 14 on necessary concepts to meet the needs of the community. He added the board had received a memo with information about an extended COVID-19 learning plan. The full plan is scheduled to come before the board for a vote on Sept. 28, and will also be discussed at a board workshop Monday.

“Part of our plan is how we are going to instruct and whether it is going to be remote, hybrid, things like that,” said Roberts, who reminded officials the plan must be updated and reconfirmed every 30 days throughout the school year.

“So our plan is not static. So right now we have certain things in our plan that we can change every 30 days. Let's for example let's just say right now we are in remote and we determined to go into some model of hybrid or, some form of face-to-face instruction. Our plan can reflect that,” Roberts said.

The Sept. 14 meeting was attended by over 200 people. The majority of parents who spoke requested an option for in-person instruction. Many were parents of elementary school students, parents with multiple children in one household or parents of special needs students. Among their concerns were the current stress on themselves and their students, mental health effects of limited social interaction and technology issues. Some indicated they had quit jobs to assist students with remote learning, while their spouses continued to work and questioned the COVID-19 data that the district relies on. Roberts described the path that led the board to choose a remote start to the school year.

“Prior to August 10 we had planned for a return to in person instruction and we had talked a lot about the hybrid model. Many of you might be aware of that. You might have listened to the town hall,” Roberts said.

“But over the summer right after that report was released conditions had really changed in our state and in Macomb County. In all of June in Macomb County there were 530 cases of COVID. And that is when we started to plan for a return to school. When we started that planning process we were in phase four of the governor's six phase plan,” Roberts said. “And phase four allowed for in-person instruction. But as we started at that time we really were hopeful that we would go to phase five. It seemed to be the path in the state was on.”

As the district planned for an i- person option for return to school, the virus took an unwelcome turn, according to Roberts.

“Unfortunately cases of COVID dramatically increased in the month of July throughout August in our state. In August cases were nearly that of April and April was the highest month so far. Macomb Township had the third-highest number of COVID cases in the county. Clinton Township had the fifth highest in the month of August. So to us at that time it made sense to open remotely,” Roberts said.

The district has distributed 3,800 devices for remote learning, and has 3,000 more it expects to receive soon. Roberts discussed the preparations the district made for remote learning and also assured parents officials are aware of the necessary technology learning curve for parents, students

and teachers. He added that he has heard both positive and negative comments regarding remote learning and that going into the remote learning process, officials were aware challenges would be greater for younger students or those with special needs.

“It is frustrating for the administration and the Board of Education because more than anything we would like to do what we have always done and what we think we have always been very successful at doing, and that is in-person instruction. So I want to end with this. The good news is, is that the numbers are trending in the right direction,” Roberts said.

Like other county school systems, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services Donald Brosky said Chippewa Valley must submit a COVID-19 learning plan outlining educational goals. Chippewa Valley’s educational goals were created with input from county superintendents, the MISD and Chippewa Valley’s educational services department.

“We need to specify the goals to be achieved by middle of the year and end of the year,” Brosky said. “Increased student achievement, growth on benchmark assistance overall for all students and for all subgroups, assurances that the district will select benchmark assessments that are aligned to state standards and administer the assessments to all students to determine whether they are making meaningful progress toward mastery of the standards.”

Brosky also said that the district’s implementation of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) measures of academic progress meet the requirement for the assurances.

“End goals must be measurable through the NWEA map assessments. Both reader and mathematics goals state that by midyear an increased number of students will meet their reading and their math goals through NWEA benchmark assessments for all students in subgroups of 30 or more students. So that is our midyear goal that we are providing for you this evening,” Brosky said.