



June 25, 2020

Dear Cotter Students and Families,

This letter is coming to you as a student, or a parent of a student, who is planning to attend Cotter Schools in fall 2020. In these uncertain times of Covid-19, we know you have many questions about what school will look like in the fall and we want to share as much information as possible with you now regarding fall semester at Cotter Schools. These past months have been extremely difficult for all of us, but we are ready and prepared to move Cotter Schools forward.

A team of faculty, staff, and administration have been working for weeks on a Re-entry Plan for Cotter Schools. We have spent many hours reviewing official documents, soliciting information from other schools, and developing a plan that is flexible enough to meet changing conditions. The values that have guided our planning are the following priorities:

1. Creating a Safe and Healthy Environment for All
2. Providing a High-Quality Academic Experience
3. Creating protocols that are practical and doable for all concerned
4. Being Financially Responsible

Following the Minnesota Department of Health and Department of Education's guidelines ([2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools](#)) and in conjunction with Governor Walz [Stay Safe MN Plan](#), we have developed plans for the three suggested scenarios:

- Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students
- Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits
- Scenario 3: Distance learning only

At this time, we do not know which scenario the Governor will choose for the fall; and he is not releasing his recommendation until **after July 27, 2020**. We know you want to know something before then, so we are sharing our "**Plan A**." Our preferred plan that provides the safest learning environment possible, if 20+ students are allowed in a classroom while still maintaining social distancing protocols, is to have all students come to school each day but follow grade-specific orientation. We would propose:

- High school students follow a rotating A/B day block schedule to minimize transitions and maximize learning.
- Junior high students follow a seven-period day schedule with built in time for breaks, homeroom, and flex periods. Students would remain in pods and the teachers would rotate locations.
- Elementary students would remain with their primary teacher and specialists would rotate locations.

Again, this model only works if Gov. Walz increases the amount of people allowed in a classroom to greater than 20.

Plan B for us, if the number remains limited to 10 people per classroom, is a **2-week hybrid option**. Students would start the school year in person so they can meet their teachers and new classmates. This would be a 3-day rotation to allow all classes to meet with fewer than 10 students in the class period. In this scenario, we would follow an A,B,C model in which 1/3 of the students would be assigned to each letter group, and they would attend school only once every three days for the first two weeks (three days in total). Then we would shift primarily into a distance learning model with options for students who need additional support or opt-in, small group activities to occur in the afternoons as needed.

Plan C will need to be employed if all schools are closed at any point in the year. This plan would involve distance learning in a manner similar to what we did in the Spring, but with some changes based on our experience and evaluations. We acknowledge that this mode will likely be employed at some points during the year, if not several times.

Please note that if we are engaged in either Plan A or Plan B, the following protocols will be observed:

- Every person entering a Cotter School building will be monitored for signs of illness and have their temperature taken.
- Every person moving around in a common space in a Cotter Schools building (hallways, bathrooms, etc.) will be required to wear a mask.
- Any person who exhibits a temperature or any sign of a respiratory illness will be asked to return home immediately.
- If any person enters the building and is later found to be positive for Covid-19, the building will be closed for 48 hours for cleaning.

While our buildings currently remain closed, we continue to explore safe options during the summer, both outdoors and indoors. We continue to require health and safety monitoring of all students and staff, and we are making every effort to ensure a quality learning experience that educates the whole student. Updates from the Activities Department with additional summer opportunities and guidelines will be shared next week.

We appreciate the feedback you provided in our e-Learning surveys this spring, and we are seeking your feedback once again to help us shape the best possible experience for our students during the upcoming school year. We really appreciate your participation in this process. This information is time sensitive, so please complete the survey at your earliest convenience. [Click this link to access the survey.](#)

As we have all learned through the Covid-19 experience, plans can change dramatically overnight. Our decision for re-opening will be based on the guidance given from the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, and the Governor's Office in late July. Our finalized plan for the fall semester will be made in the best interest of the health and safety of our students, staff, and community, and we will communicate final plans to all families the first week of August.

We miss you and hope you are staying healthy and happy during these summer months! We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with you to serve your families.

Thank you for all you do to support Cotter Schools! Stay safe! Be well!

Sr. Judith Schaefer
President, Cotter Schools

Mary Eileen Fitch
Vice-Principal for Curriculum & Instruction

Dave Forney
Vice-Principal of Student Affairs