

NSPRA

GOLD

MEDALLION 2021

North Shore School District 112
REOPENING OF IN-PERSON SCHOOLING



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SYNOPSIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that schools are more than an educational institution. They're the lifeblood of our community and at the center of who we are and who we strive to be. In the summer of 2020 schools across the nation were faced with a profound yet fundamental question, how to reopen schools during a global pandemic. North Shore School District 112 (NSSD112) took on this immense challenge with the formation of a working group made up of 50 stakeholders featuring administrators, teachers, board members, and parents. The committees formed to address four key areas: **Instruction/Social-Emotional Learning, Operations, Resources, and Communication.**

The committees then joined forces with 10 other school districts from across the nation to work together to embark on what would be the challenge of a lifetime in terms of educational administration and operational logistics. Due to exceptional communication and operational execution, NSSD112 was one of very few school districts in the Chicago-land area to open in an in-person hybrid learning model in September 2020. Prior to reopening of schools the district launched a robust communication effort that focused on the reopening of schools in a hybrid model. The campaign has been highly successful based on both analytical and anecdotal feedback and data points.

This campaign succeeded in fostering confidence in the district's reopening plan resulting in the high adoption of the hybrid in-person model option. It also led to an increase in positive parent sentiment as measured by a parent engagement survey and other feedback gathering methods.

For the first seven weeks of school, District 112 was a regional leader in operating the hybrid in-person learning model before having to pause in October due to an increase of COVID-19 cases in the surrounding community. After the pause the in-person hybrid model resumed in February 2021. The district is now set to open in full in-person schooling in April 2021. This submission maps out how the NSSD112 community worked together to ensure students, their families, and staff felt safe and empowered to reopen schools in September 2020.



Through our research we quickly learned that a strong communication plan was key to the success of the reopening. The district learned that there was a strong desire for transparency and clarity associated with the COVID-19 mitigation strategies that would be in place for staff and students as well as how educational instruction would be delivered. This and other insights were gathered from a series of surveys including several e-learning surveys, two ThoughtExchange campaigns, a reopening survey as well as an FAQ input form. The district also held a series of eight ‘town hall’ style webinars for students and staff.

The key findings from this research found:

- How family and staff communication goals challenges differed
- There was a desire to know when cases were occurring at a school
- There was a need for a summary of the reopening plan
- That the preferred method of communication was email and video messages
- The research was also used to develop the key focus areas Instruction/Social-Emotional Learning, Operations, Resources, and Communication.

All decisions made about reopening schools, as well as all communication decisions, were grounded in scientific research and public health guidance. These resources included the [Starting the 2020-21 School Year Part 3 - Transition Joint Guidance](#), The School Superintendents Association [AASA COVID-19 Recovery Task Force Guidelines for Reopening Schools](#) along with the [Communication Considerations for Schools](#) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the [Illinois Department of Public Health \(IDPH\) Schools Guidance](#).

These resources grounded the entire organization and allowed leaders in the district to focus on perfecting the implementation of the reopening plan and not second guessing or searching for answers when roadblocks and difficult questions arose. Furthermore, understanding this information allowed the communication committee to know what information mattered most, which greatly aided in communication prioritization.



Overview

The communication committee consisted of the superintendent, director of communication, a board of education member, a principal, teacher, and three parents. It was the goal of the committee to create a plan to communicate the recommendations put forth by the other committees.

Roles and Responsibilities

Superintendent

Dr. Michael Lubelfeld would lead from the front with a robust communication effort that included regular parent emails and weekly video updates. He was named to Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker's COVID-19 School Task Force and advised on important issues impacting the students of the Chicagoland area. Dr. Lubelfeld also did a large amount of local and national press interviews. He was the subject of or quoted in placement coming from the Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, NBC 5 Chicago, WGN Chicago, WBEZ Chicago, and more. District 112 was able to lead on the reopening of schools nearly entirely based on his leadership and communication effectiveness.

Communication Director

The communication director's role was execution of the campaign as outlined by the committee and in support of the superintendent. The director produced videos in-house and worked with freelance graphic artists to produce the collateral for the campaign. The director also produced social emotional learning content and other good news stories to boost morale and show that the district was still moving forward on many fronts despite the pandemic.

Committee

The committee's role was to define the parameters of the communication plan and act as a sounding board for the administration.

Target Audience

Target audiences for the campaign were parents and staff. Parents had many concerns regarding the opening and needed a venue to voice concerns and find answers to questions. Staff members also had many concerns but they differed from the parents.

The following steps were taken to cater to both groups:

- When major messages were sent to the public at large, the district would produce a staff only version of the communication and list in-line notes that further broke down each piece of information from a staff perspective
- Informational meetings would be held with both groups to hear concerns and address them
- Parents would be asked to choose between a hybrid in-person learning model and a full virtual learning model
- Parents would be provided the information needed for a decision on how their child would be educated for the school year.
- All of the reasonable staff safety concerns would be addressed and communicated prior to opening

Budget

Printing - 1,500

Graphic Design - \$500

Total - \$2,000

Objective

The recommendation of the steering committee was to open a school in a two-day per week in-person hybrid learning model while also giving a choice to families to select a virtual learning option if they did not want their student to attend in person. At the end of each marking period parents would be surveyed choosing between hybrid or full virtual learning. It was the stance of the district that students would benefit from being in school and it could be done safely with the proper plan and mitigations in place.

Thus the objective of was set as:

Effectively communicate information about all learning models and gain 70% adoption of the district's student population in the Hybrid Learning Model each trimester/quarter.

The committee's communication must have goals included:

- Produce a plan summary that could be easily understood
- Frequently communicate all mitigation efforts and community transmission rates
- Send parents and staff notices of any COVID-19 cases so that the school community could track the virus together
- Share positive stories to boost and sustain morale and positivity
- Share instructional plans for both the virtual and the in-person hybrid learning models



IMPLEMENTATION

The campaign was divided into three main phases that would be executed throughout the school year. With the pre-opening being Phase I, opening and start of school and possible learning model changes being Phase II, and sharing positive stories within the district being Phase III.

Phase I

Foster a two-way conversation with the public to collect questions and disseminate information.

Strategy

Create a central online hub for information that features a FAQ component, videos, and details of the reopening plan.

Tactic	Primary Audiences	Message/Content	Timing/Status
Video series introducing the start of the school restart planning Process.	Parents, Staff, Community	Kicked off the campaign with the superintendent laying out the planning process and the opportunities and challenges	Three videos resulting in 6,993 views Jul 20, 2020 - 2,949 views Jul 31, 2020 - 1,766 views Aug 18, 2020 - 2,278 view
Graphics for the campaign	Parents, Staff, Community	Graphics were created to brand reopening communication material	Completed August 2020 Hybrid Learning Graphic Rosie the Learner Graphic
Social media campaign asking for FAQ questions	Parents, Staff, Community	Facebook Post	Completed July 3 4.2k reach resulting in more than 300 questions being submitted.
Newsletter launching the website, FAQ, and a preview of the reopening plan	Parents, Staff, Community	Planning process update with a call to action to explore the new FAQ	Completed July 10 9,323 email opens Link to email

launching of the Reopening webpage portal	Parents, Staff, Community	Webpage that acted as a central online hub for information	Completed July 10 9,323 webpage visits to-date Link to webpage
Student Town Halls with Dr. Lubelfeld	Students	Zoom meeting that engaged D112 students. Students were given an open forum to ask the superintendent's cabinet	Held July 16
Reopening Plan Summary	Parents, Staff, Community	After the Phase I planning process came to an end, the full plan document was converted into a summary that would be more accessible to the average reader	Completed July 21 Link to Summary
Staff Town Halls with Dr. Lubelfeld	Staff	A series of seven Zoom meetings that engaged D112 staff in a two-way dialog	Completed August -September

Phase II

Communicate all facets or aspects of the Reopening Plan.

Strategy

Implement an integrated informational campaign focusing on the Reopening Plan and the core values driving the plan.

Tactic	Primary Audience	Message/Content	Timing/Status
Produce a series of videos and/or blog posts that bookend the summer planning process and previews the start of school.	Parents, Staff, Community	Updates on the plan and other important information	Three videos resulting in 4,745 views Sep 10, 2020 - 1,387 views Sep 30, 2020 - 1,680 views October 28 - 2020 - 1,678 views
Social media posts from the first day of school. The photos will be of in person and/or e-learning instruction.	Parents, Staff, Community	Back-to-school messaging with images of in-person instruction	September 3 3.5k reach, more than 150 likes, 9 comments and 6 shares Link to Facebook post

Daily communication featuring emails and video updates	Parents, Staff	This included daily updates of cases of report COVID-19 positive tests results allowing the community to track the virus	Ongoing Example 1 Example 2
Thought Exchange campaign to book end the campaign and lead to full in person	Parents, Staff, Community	ThoughtExchange asked the community “What additional clarity do you seek with regards to our transition to the April Pivot to Full In-person or Full Virtual Learning?”	This was done at the end of the campaign in March 2021 as the district moved from hybrid to full in-person lead to 1,234 participants leaving 1,053 thoughts that produced 43,856 ratings

Phase III

Create positive content that highlights the district new construction projects and social emotional learning

Strategy

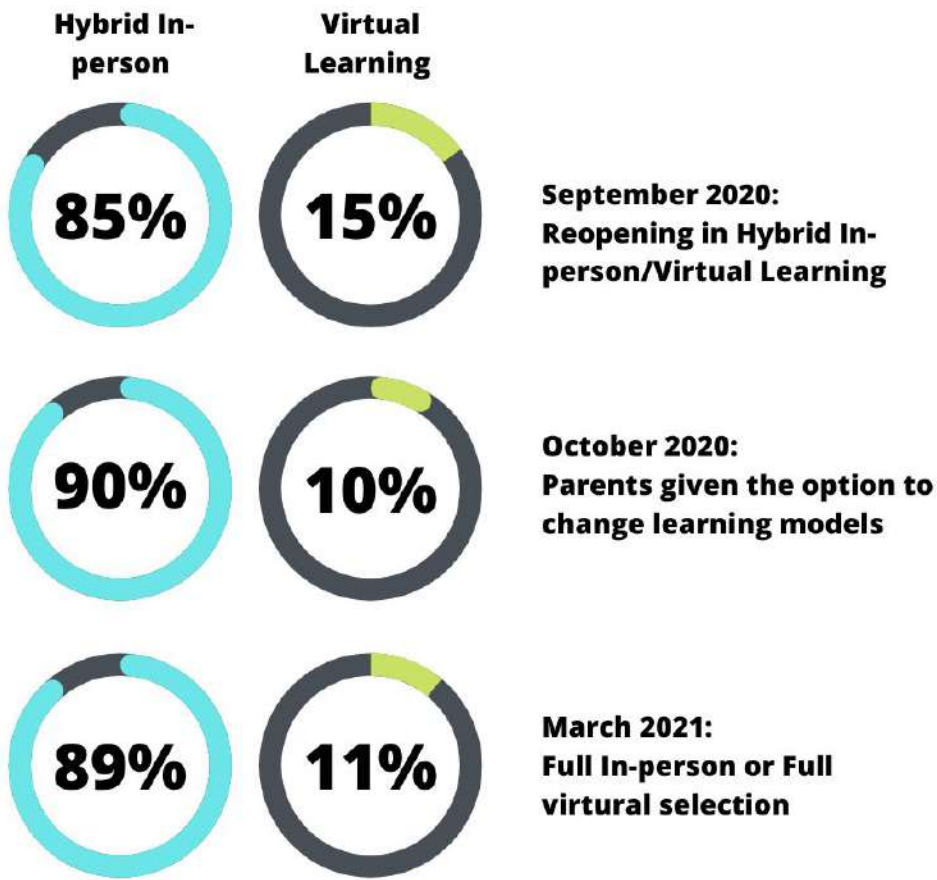
Highlight the district’s Long-Range Plan with a hashtag campaign and promote social emotional learning resources

Tactic	Primary Audience	Message/Content	Timing/Status
Launch Optimistic Household family SEL	Parents, Staff, Community	Shawn Achor, bestselling author and expert in positive psychology helped the district produce a series of six interactive videos designed for NSSD112 families to foster learning and social-emotional wellbeing	1,018 video views and 545 website views in a 6-week span Link to Optimistic Household
How to Deal With the Stress of COVID and Remote Learning	Parents	Presenters Dr. Makki and Dr. Novak presented to the D112 community sharing their extensive experience helping families function effectively and form healthy and lasting bonds	Event held live and posted on December 3 89 live viewers 48 video views Link to event video
Promotion of parent event “Building Resilience During a Pandemic”	Parents	Presenter Doug Bolton, Ph.D., shared strategies and current social science research meant to help during challenging times	Event held live and posted on December 17 132 live viewers 192 video views Link to event video
Launch Facility Fridays hashtag campaign (#FacilityFridays) to highlight the completion of Northwood Middle School	Parents, Staff, Community	This weekly video series highlighted the building project within the district. This hashtag campaign gave a sense that no matter what was going on around it the project would continue even if the world around it seemingly ground to a halt	Started November 2020 Ongoing Example



EVALUATION

The campaign received enormous success based on the fact that the in person numbers exceeded our goal each time we asked our parents. We finished the first three quarters of the school year with several reported cases but no clusters of outbreaks or any real evidence of school spread of the virus. We attribute that to enhanced mitigation efforts, the commitment of our staff and students, and the faith the parents placed in us. Furthermore, our ongoing communications led to an increase from when we asked in September to when we asked in October. The district will go full in-person on April 6 and will welcome back 89 percent of its student population to school full time in-person.



There was also a positive increase in public sentiment in regards to the district. After years of mistrust and a failed referendum, a new administration had been rebuilding the district's reputation over the span of two years and recently passed a \$74 million dollar modernized plan just before the pandemic hit. Due to careful planning, management, and communication, parent appreciation has reached a high point. The administration received letters, emails, and social media posts of thanks and appreciation. Some of these parent comments are below.

Thank you for everything you are all doing to keep our community safe and our children engaged.

Thank you for putting contract tracing into motion. That is how we manage this pandemic (and masks, wash hands and distance).

Thank you for your hard work. Hybrid kid came home happy, safe and tired. He was totally comfortable at the school.

Thank you so much for all your time and hard work and for getting these kids back on school!!!! Prayers for a safe and healthy year for all!!!

Congratulations to everyone who was involved in the planning for our second first day back today! Both my kids were so excited, you would have thought they were going to Disney World. Huge success and thank you to everyone in the district who played a part!



GRAPHICS

We Can Do It!



 NORTH SHORE
SCHOOL DISTRICT 112

 CITY of HIGHWOOD
Incorporated 1880

 HP Highland Park



GRAPHICS



GRAPHICS



OVERVIEW



K-8th grade students will have the option to return to a hybrid learning model blending in-person and virtual learning.



All schools will follow public health guidelines for school facilities and individuals



A fully Remote Learning (e-Learning) option will be available for all families who opt out of in-person learning.



Safe transportation will be provided with social distancing, bus capacity limits, and thorough cleanings.



GRAPHICS

INTRODUCTION

North Shore School District 112 is dedicated to ensuring our students and staff return safely in-person to school for the 2020-2021 school year to the degree possible and practical in light of IDPH health guidelines and regulations. In person learning at the start of the year will look different than what we are used to as we are currently recommending a hybrid learning model consisting of two shifts of students, morning and afternoon, to allow us to implement risk mitigation of COVID-19 with a smaller population in school at one time. We will focus on providing an environment that is caring, supportive, and compassionate, with the understanding that the health and wellbeing of our students, staff, and community is our highest priority.

Provide safe learning environments for our students and staff.

Safety

Communication

Provide proactive, and concise communication to all families, staff, and students.

Learning

Ensure that all students receive instruction that meets Illinois State Learning Standards and provides necessary supports for success.

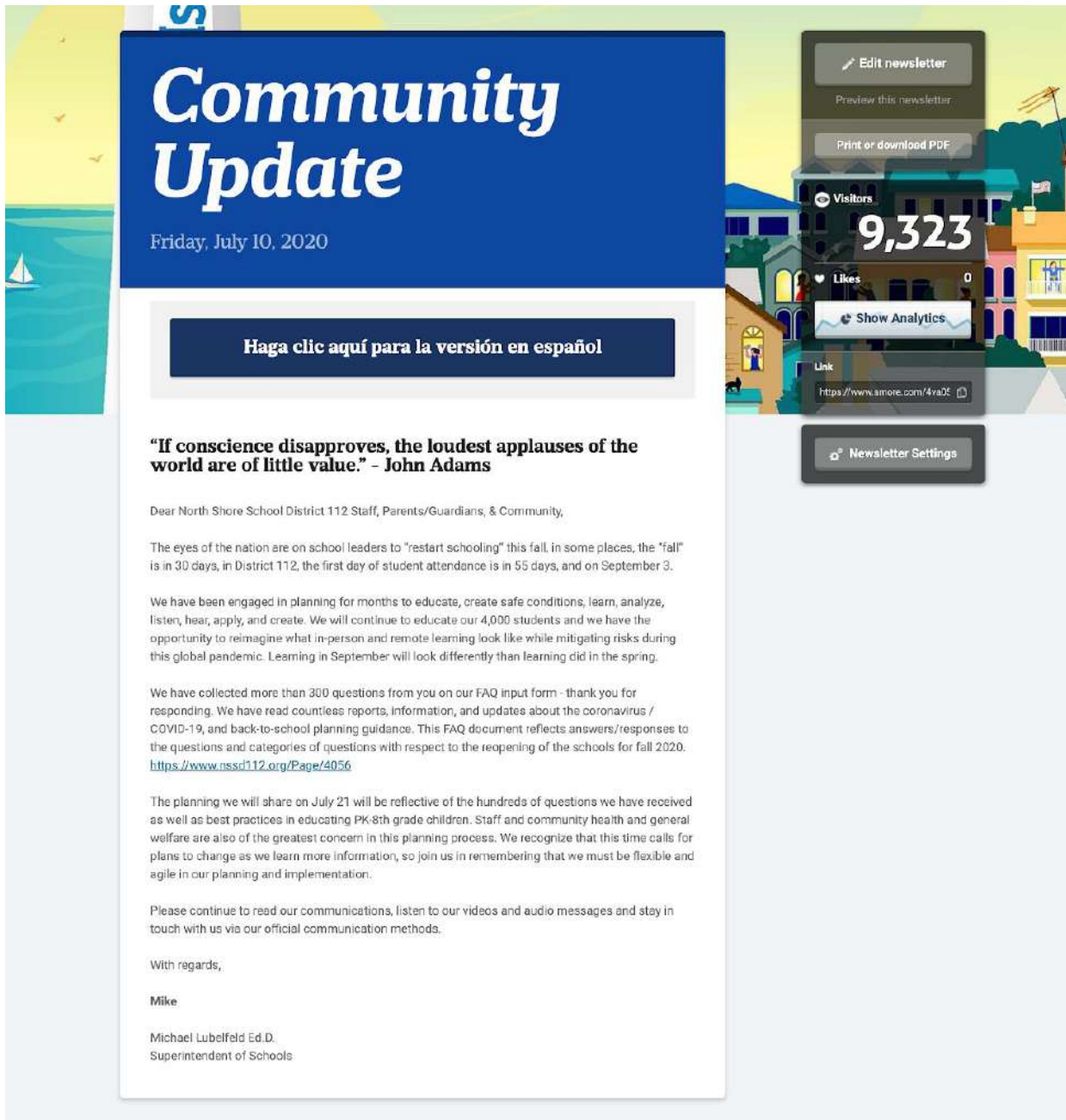
- Equitable access to technology
- Social-emotional well-being and health are supported
- Ensure we provide support to meet the needs of specific student groups.

HYBRID LEARNING MODEL





NEWSLETTERS



Community Update

Friday, July 10, 2020

[Haga clic aquí para la versión en español](#)

“If conscience disapproves, the loudest applauses of the world are of little value.” – John Adams

Dear North Shore School District 112 Staff, Parents/Guardians, & Community,

The eyes of the nation are on school leaders to “restart schooling” this fall. In some places, the “fall” is in 30 days, in District 112, the first day of student attendance is in 55 days, and on September 3.

We have been engaged in planning for months to educate, create safe conditions, learn, analyze, listen, hear, apply, and create. We will continue to educate our 4,000 students and we have the opportunity to reimagine what in-person and remote learning look like while mitigating risks during this global pandemic. Learning in September will look differently than learning did in the spring.

We have collected more than 300 questions from you on our FAQ input form - thank you for responding. We have read countless reports, information, and updates about the coronavirus / COVID-19, and back-to-school planning guidance. This FAQ document reflects answers/responses to the questions and categories of questions with respect to the reopening of the schools for fall 2020. <https://www.nssd112.org/Page/4056>

The planning we will share on July 21 will be reflective of the hundreds of questions we have received as well as best practices in educating PK-8th grade children. Staff and community health and general welfare are also of the greatest concern in this planning process. We recognize that this time calls for plans to change as we learn more information, so join us in remembering that we must be flexible and agile in our planning and implementation.

Please continue to read our communications, listen to our videos and audio messages and stay in touch with us via our official communication methods.

With regards,

Mike

Michael Lubelfeld Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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How We Stay Open Video

September 30, 2020

The superintendent is sharing this seven-minute video update on the school year, the reopening, and the next steps in the effort to remain open in a virtual/hybrid learning model.

How We Stay Open Video 9.30.20



Watch on 

Click on the Youtube CC button to view edited subtitles in English and Spanish

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NEWSLETTERS

Full In-Person/Virtual Selection

March 9, 2021

Dear North Shore School District 112 Families,

Tonight, at the Board of Education meeting, North Shore School District 112 announced a pivot to full in-person schooling starting April 6 (K-5) | April 12 (6-8). We are sharing this selection opportunity with you to aid the planning process for this pivot from Hybrid Learning to Full In-Person or Full Virtual learning for your family.

Families can select from either the Full In-person Learning Model or the Full Virtual Learning Model, effective April 6 for elementary students and April 12 for middle school students. The Hybrid Learning Model will no longer be offered effectively on those dates.

DEADLINE: Please complete this form by Friday, March 12 at 5 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: A failure to fill out this form will result in a student being automatically placed into the Full In-person Learning Model.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: To find out more about the learning models being offered starting in April, please review the [March 9 Schooling Report](#) (pivot details) and the [March 9 Superintendent's Report](#) (travel information).

K-5 Selection Form

[ENGLISH K-5 SELECTION FORM](#)

[SPANISH K-5 SELECTION FORM](#)

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NEWSLETTERS

THOUGHTEXCHANGE

MARCH 9, 2021

Dear North Shore School District 112 Families, Staff, and Community,

Our carefully laid out plans call for the April pivot to full in-person/virtual learning to commence on April 6 for elementary students and on April 12 for middle school students. Families have been given a choice to select full-day in-person or full-day virtual learning for the remainder of the school year (April - June). This ThoughtExchange is a live online forum that allows participants (students, parents, staff, community) to submit thoughts regarding District 112's April learning pivot.

HOW IT WORKS: Take part in the exchange by answering one open-ended question with as many responses as you like and then move on to the next step which is Star. In Star, you'll see your thoughts and the thoughts of others and assign stars to each thought (from 1-5) depending on how strongly you identify with the question or idea.

NEXT STEPS: Please proceed by reading the question and submitting to the exchange and explore the thoughts left by others. Don't forget to check back frequently to read the other thoughts as the exchange progresses. The AI in this system reorganizes questions so you have a chance to respond to people's thoughts throughout the one-week exchange. The end result will help District leadership determine action plans and priorities for the April learning pivot. Your voices matter and your clarifying questions will guide our work.

DEADLINE: This Exchange will close on Tuesday, March 17 at 5 p.m.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: To find out more about the learning models being offered starting in April, please review the [March 9 Schooling Report](#) (pivot details) and the [March 9 Superintendent's Report](#) (travel information).

**TAKE PART IN THE LEARNING MODEL PIVOT
THOUGHTEXCHANGE**

Seek clarity, be part of our solutions, please

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SOCIAL MEDIA



North Shore School District 112

Published by North Shore SD · July 22, 2020 ·

Last night the NSSD112 administration presented its Reopening of School Plan to the Board of Education. We have also just released a Summary of the plan at <http://nssd112.org/Summary>. You can find the full plan, videos, and an archive of related information at <http://nssd112.org/COVID-19>. #112Leads



1,700
People Reached

372
Engagements


Boost Post

12

9 Comments 4 Shares




SOCIAL MEDIA

 **North Shore School District 112**
Published by North Shore SD · August 12, 2020 ·

District 112 with the City of Highland Park, the City of Highwood, and the Town of Fort Sheridan **NEED YOUR HELP!** Do your part by continuing to wear face masks and practice social distancing!

Together we can prevent community spread and keep local schools and businesses safe and open!



We Can Do It! ¡Podemos hacerlo!

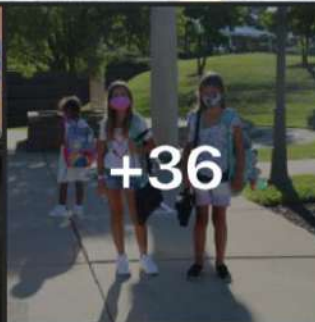
2,161 People Reached **490** Engagements [Boost Post](#)

95 **7 Shares**

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

What a wonderful start to an unprecedented school year! The District is buzzing with the energy of our students both in-person and online. Here are some of the images we were able to capture on the first day of school. [#112Leads](#)



3,355
People Reached

2,870
Engagements

Boost Post

156

9 Comments 6 Shares



Like

Comment


Share



SOCIAL MEDIA

 **North Shore School District 112**
Published by North Shore SD · September 30, 2020 · 

Dr. Lubelfeld is sharing this seven-minute video update on the school year, the reopening, and the next steps in the effort to remain open in a virtual/hybrid learning model.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbYy4q32nRE>




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828
People Reached

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Engagements

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