

Welcome to the 2020-21 School Year!

The entire staff at Horace Mann Middle School is excited to welcome our new students to HMMS and to welcome back our students who spent last year with us. Our staff and our families have been through a lot these past months, and we understand that this year will look different with challenges ahead. However, our staff looks forward to providing our students with an education with high expectations, one that can successfully move from virtual learning to in-person learning, and one that will provide safety precautions to our staff and students. It will look different than previous years, but we have been preparing for this year more than ever before. This letter will outline the learning experience and expectations for our students, our plans to introduce or reintroduce your student to Horace Mann, and provide some insight into the plans we have been making for the school year. This letter is also available on our website (horacemann.wausauschools.org) with direct links and has been emailed to those families with an email on record.

First, our students will have higher expectations for their academic achievement in comparison to the school shutdown last Spring. Teachers have already started their work on their online classroom with a plan for the year (scope and sequence) that looks similar to those prior to the pandemic. Students can expect to cover and be assessed on a similar amount of learning targets. Students will be graded in an A, B, C, D, F system that has an expectation that they keep up with their school work on a daily basis. Students will be expected to attend classes from 7:35am to 2:55pm, including announcements at 7:35. Daily attendance will be taken in each class. Breaks will be given between classes, lunch, and periodically throughout the day. Please note that there will be exceptions made for some families who cannot follow this schedule, and we will work with families to ensure learning continues. To begin the school year, we will begin virtually which means that students will be expected to log into their itslearning site and be available for google meets (virtual face-to-face meetings) during their scheduled periods. It is our intent to keep students engaged in learning throughout the school day. This does not mean their eyes will be glued to screens all day as we will have combinations of live screen time, recorded content, and non-screen lessons/activities.

Second, we want to set our students and families up for success by inviting them to a “Ready to Start School” conference. We are recommending that each student and one family member attend school for 30-45 minutes between September 1- 4. Please sign up at https://ptcfast.com/schools/Horace_Mann_Middle_School. The time in school will be used to turn in the envelope with completed paperwork (please make any changes to the census form) provided in this mailing, receive student schedules, and give students their chromebook and charger. Please know that we have suspended school fees at this time with a few exceptions (ex. Chromebook insurance payments can be enclosed in the envelope). Students and a family member will then be able to pick-up school resources (ex. Math book) and meet at least one of their teaching staff. We are spacing out entrance times, maintaining social distance throughout the process, and all people entering the building will need to wear a mask covering their nose and mouth. We will also sanitize areas often throughout the day. A more detailed plan is included at the end of this letter.

Third, we have been preparing for this year with flexibility in mind. Our teaching staff are already preparing their online classrooms in itslearning so that content will be available each day. Online classrooms will continue to be updated all year to be available for students virtually and in any in-person models. Our teaching staff are preparing their classrooms for in-person learning and will begin teaching from their classrooms on Tuesday, September 8th. The plan, as outlined at a recent school board meeting ([August 10th](#), click on How Will We Open Wausau Schools Safely) is to begin a phased reopening plan with timing based on reviews at the school board level. As more in-person opportunities become available, teachers will continue to teach in the classroom to those in-person and those students at home. Students should expect some changes when in person. Examples may include, but are not limited to: masks to be worn, desks spaced out and facing the same direction, keeping distance from the teacher, limited or no movement in the building, and students grouped in cohorts. The details of these examples will be determined based on the number of students in the building and based on reviews at the school board level.

There are a few other details to note:

- It has been decided that all WVC Middle School fall sports have been cancelled and a determination of winter and spring sports will be determined at a later date. We are currently looking at offering some after school opportunities at school when we return to in-person education.
- We will not take student pictures at this time and have rescheduled pictures for January.
- School supply list- we have decided not to publicize at this point and will try to provide most supplies when we return to in-person education. Please provide your student with the basic supplies needed for virtual learning, such as pencils, pens, notebooks, and paper. If you need supplies, we will have some available at the “Ready to Start School” conference or you can call us at school to request supplies.
- There are many other plans that are being prepared for this school year ([August 10th](#), click on Project Relaunch Wausau School District).
- Please continue to watch email and our website for updates on this school year. This communication may include details about a HUB model where certain students return, returning to an in-person option, transportation, food services, internet, etc. Communication will be ongoing.

As Horace Mann’s principal, I take pride in what we offer to our students each year, specifically in high academic standards and a culture where our connections to each other lead to our success together. This year will have its challenges, but please know that our focus remains on our students and families. Together, we navigate these challenges, celebrate our successes, and make every day a great day.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rob Phelps
Principal, Horace Mann Middle School