

Education On Target

by Supt. Niemann

Enrollment Increases

Enrollment at Ashby Public School continues to grow quickly. The number of K-12 Arrows beginning the '20-21 school year is 20 higher compared to the end of last school year. The increased enrollment growth is coming from both "residential" and "open enrolled" students. Ashby graduated 15 students last year and welcomed in 29 kindergarten students this fall for a net gain of 14 students organically; while the number of open enrolled students has swelled by 6 students. This increased enrollment, which was significantly larger than projected, is especially surprising in this era of Covid-19. Due primarily to concerns about Covid-19, APS lost 6 students to homeschooling. It is our hope that once coronavirus fears subside, these students will return to Ashby School.

Over the course of the last 5 years, enrollment at Ashby Public Schools has increased by about 70 students. This growth bodes well for the stability and sustainability of our school as well as our community. However, it has caused our facilities to start to burst at the seams. During the summer, two rooms needed to be repurposed to make room for the additional students and to allow for capacity limits due to the covid virus. Rooms that formerly were used as an ITV (Interactive TV) room and computer lab were transitioned into 3rd grade and 2nd grade classrooms, respectively.

Looking forward, enrollment is projected to continue growing into the foreseeable future. By the 2033-34 school year, it is 'conservatively' estimated that K-12 enrollment for Ashby Public School will be approximately 356; over 12% larger than current enrollment.

APS Acts to Reduce Covid Spread

Ashby Public School has taken multiple actions on multiple fronts to reduce the chances of students and staff members contracting the covid virus while at school. First and foremost, all state mandates are being followed. All students are screened daily prior to coming into the building. Masks are required in school buildings and on school buses while social distancing is encouraged to the extent feasible. Social distancing is encouraged through use of vinyl floor arrows and instructional wall signage. Similarly, students have been instructed on strategies they can utilize, such as frequent hand washing, which can help to mitigate the spread of viruses. Additionally, students are required to use backpacks and are not allowed to mingle by their lockers in order to further promote social distancing. Staff are encouraged to take students outside when outdoor learning is possible. Recess zones allow for students to participate in a variety of activities each week without mixing students from each class. Drop off and pick up procedures allow for the safe transfer of students in and out of the building without the mix of students and parents in the building. Acrylic barriers have been purchased and placed in offices and the cafeteria. All rooms are furnished with hand sanitizer and students are encouraged to use them on an hourly basis. To ensure deep, thorough cleaning of our facilities, an additional part time, very experienced custodian was added to our staff to clean areas more frequently. When in the "hybrid" learning model, 50% capacity limitations are placed on classrooms and on buses. Band and choir classes are conducted in the gym instead of the band room where

students can physically distance by 6 feet or more and more ventilation is in use. And finally, visitors are not allowed into the building so as to reduce the risk of the virus being inadvertently brought into our environment.

Ashby Public School is asking the general public to do their share to also help slow or even stop the spread of the covid virus. Parents should check the well being of their children every morning prior to sending them off to school. If their child has any symptoms of covid, they are asked to keep them home. The more we can all do to help keep our number of covid cases low in Grant and Otter Tail Counties; the more we can open up our schools to in-person learning and allow for an increase in extracurricular activities.