



T4T Considerations

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Now entering the second semester of our T4T (Together for Tomorrow) Plan, Maize USD 266 has put together additional information for the OneMa1ze community further explaining the environment and factors that led to decisions currently in place and that may continue to be considered in coming weeks and months. Certainly, no decision is easy or obvious, and each decision has ramifications on other elements of school operations. The district also operates in the midst of changing COVID trends in the community and with factors it cannot control at times.

This document reviews unique aspects related to Maize USD 266 that have been relevant throughout the T4T process, T4T considerations and related issues and challenges, and additional information regarding the T4T plan.

District leaders acknowledge that each change and decision affects its students, employees, families, employers, and greater OneMa1ze community and are grateful to each person for the adjustments they have made. In many cases, these modifications have required tremendous sacrifices for families, work schedules, daily routines, and home life.

Navigating a school district through a novel pandemic has been complex. District leaders intend for this document to provide a bit more insight into some of what guided current operations and decisions.

Maize USD 266 Related Aspects

The following are a few factors to consider about Maize USD 266 that may make our district unique from others.

- **Space in our schools.** Maize USD 266 is dealing with overcrowding in some schools and is in the midst of construction on two intermediate schools that will create extra space in all five elementary schools and two middle schools. The overcrowding already would be an issue during a normal, typical school year. COVID-19 safety precautions, specifically including social distancing, have exacerbated this challenge.
- **Supervision of students.** Maize USD 266 does not typically have non-licensed employees supervise students. The district believes this is the best practice for teaching and learning. However, this also creates restrictions on the physical placement of students and potential options for learning models and other scenarios.
- **Effects of learning model changes:** With the options the district has put in place during the 2020-21 school year, families have had the ability to select between the face-to-face hybrid learning model and full-time remote learning models. However, some families have transitioned between learning models at some point during the school year. Each

change requires administrative facilitation and could have an effect on class sizes and teacher needs. Additionally, the district must forecast how any potential change, including those outside of the district's control such as community COVID trends, may spur requests for students to move from face-to-face hybrid to full-time remote and vice versa.

T4T Considerations

The following is a list of considerations made when planning for the current school year during a pandemic. In some cases, peer districts may be reconsidering and/or implementing these approaches in an attempt to maximize full-time face-to-face instruction for middle and/or high school students. With each scenario, Maize USD 266 had to consider the trade-offs or consequences in the context of what is best for our students in both the short- and long-term.

- **Electives:** Maize USD 266 explored the reduction or elimination of elective courses and then assign those teachers and staff members to monitor students in their classrooms. However, in this scenario, the “monitored” classrooms would mostly be supervised by staff members who are not licensed to instruct those classes. For example, a vocal music teacher would be supervising students in a physics classroom for the duration of the course. This option could closely resemble the hybrid model but with students present in schools or school settings.
 - **Issues/challenges:** This consideration would still require the need for additional learning space for students and teachers off-site to provide the recommended social distancing. It would be difficult to select which courses/electives to eliminate, as each adds value to students' education, and temporary elimination has long-term implications. This option raises the question about how it would affect long-term options for students interested in coursework or careers that require elective offerings. Additionally, reducing elective course offerings would increase the number of students in the remaining sections, creating new challenges to resolve.
- **Additional help:** Maize USD 266 has considered the option of hiring additional staff members or relying on volunteers to host groups of students throughout each school building. This scenario raises questions about how many people would be needed to keep class sizes manageable, what spaces would be available for such use, and who would be available to fulfill ongoing volunteer commitments.
 - **Issues/challenges:** While valuable, the reliance on volunteers could prove problematic. Finding enough qualified people who are willing and/or available to work consistently in schools is very difficult or impossible, and relying on a large consistent number of volunteers can be very risky. Considering the district's high standards regarding the adults who should work with students, not all adults who may wish to volunteer would qualify. Space is an issue, too, as the number of vacant spaces this would require is not physically available in our schools. Two of our four large secondary schools were already seeking alternative instructional spaces prior to the pandemic, pending the completion of current bond construction already underway. There are COVID-19-related safety concerns to consider with introducing more people than necessary into the schools. This draws a much larger number of students into the school, making lunches and class transitions difficult and potentially less safe. Finally, this type of instruction on a daily basis may not be much different from students learning remotely in a hybrid model.

- **Additional space(s):** The district has considered acquiring the use of large off-site settings to use as schools/classrooms. Options include local churches, movie theaters, and official district partners, such as the Maize Recreation Commission or Northwest Wichita YMCA.
 - **Issues/challenges:** Moving into additional space solves some problems but may create others. This would require a large number of extra spaces to consistently provide this for all secondary students. The nature of the secondary school schedule and variety of classes taken by students make this problematic, considering class transitions and other factors. Instructional resources, including technology and internet access, would or could be limited. The transportation challenges for students to and/or between these spaces and their normal school would be significant for an already maximized department. Fitting food service into this scenario would be a puzzle, though it likely could be solved. Additionally, this option would still require significantly more staff members to socially distance, follow other COVID-19 safety precautions, and have limited access to school nurses.

- **Quarantine rules:** The district has considered further modifying or ignoring some rules/guidelines for close contact quarantines. In this scenario, the district would discontinue or reduce internal efforts to contact trace staff members/students who could be considered close contacts to positive cases. The district would implement both-party mask compliance guidelines, which would allow students/staff members to avoid quarantine when in close contact with a positive case in school. The district could manipulate the close-contact timeframe by rotating students/staff members during class time in an attempt to avoid any potential for individuals to spend 15 minutes or more within 6 feet of each other. The district already has adopted the modified quarantine guidelines approved by the Sedgwick County Health Department and currently is testing both students and staff members with COVID tests.
 - **Issues/challenges:** The health and safety of students and staff members could be compromised. The district and special education Interlocal employs approximately 1,200 adults who work with students in or around schools every day, and their well-being also must be a district priority. This creates both short- and long-term concerns regarding staff member retention. Further, not complying with guidance provided by agencies whose job it is to issue guidance on health and medical matters increases the district's liability exposure.

Additional information regarding the Maize USD 266 T4T plan:

- **Face-to-Face teaching and learning:** The considerations outlined above are factors Maize USD 266 and other districts evaluated as options in the face of unknown conditions and considering the guidance of state and county agencies. Any change has trade-offs, and Maize made recommendations based on what was believed to be best for students. There also was the expectation that the district would need to operate in

the full-time remote learning model at some point and wanted students, staff members, and families to be as prepared as possible.

- **T4T Communication:** The district has aimed to provide transparency with its OneMa1ze COVID Advisory Team and alternative solutions and has posted information on its district website and shared updates with parents via email. It is important to the district to provide information to the OneMa1ze community. Feedback indicates that some perceive the sharing of information to be less than adequate, while others perceive it to be more than adequate. While we may not be able to provide all of the specific data requested, in part because of privacy and personnel reasons, we do attempt to provide information relevant to positive cases in the schools, quarantine data, and staffing capacity updates. For example, communicating the specific number of positive cases that result from close contact in schools is challenging due to the lack of certainty in how a person may or may not have contracted the virus. Rather than publishing questionable data, the district has conveyed that there seems to be very little transmission of the virus among students and staff members while in school.
- **School District Comparisons:** At times, Maize USD 266 receives questions related to how other school districts are operating. Most districts, given their own unique set of circumstances, have transitioned between face-to-face, hybrid, and remote learning models. Comparing how districts have made decisions during a pandemic without understanding the unique differences among those districts and the environment and factors that led to any decision is unfair and may be misleading. Maize USD 266 is unaware of any large Wichita-area district that has operated completely with face-to-face teaching and learning throughout this school year, though some have not had remote learning. Different school districts have access to different resources. In Goddard for example, where elementary and high school programming has been very similar most of the school year, the district uses intermediate and middle school settings, much like Maize will transition to next year but does not have available now. This kind of school capacity likely would allow for more full-time instruction for younger students in Maize, as well. Some districts have more students whose families opted into full-time remote learning, meaning there are fewer students in their schools proportionately, improving their ability to socially distance a larger number of students in the school building. In Andover, the district has operated in models similar to Maize for most of the school year but for a few weeks attempted to use face-to-face instruction for middle school students. The district had to return to a hybrid model due to case increase and staffing challenges. In Western Kansas, county quarantine guidelines have been more lenient for Dodge City, for example. Some districts have made different decisions than Maize regarding elective course offerings, non-licensed supervisory staff members to cover classes, or reduced compliance with quarantine guidelines to increase the number of students who attend school on a daily basis. The following table is one created by Maize USD 266 to illustrate this.

USD	September 2020			December 2020		
	Elem	Middle	High	Elem	Middle	High
Maize	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Hybrid	Remote	Remote	Remote
Wichita	Face-to-Face	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote
Diocese*	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Hybrid
Andover	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Hybrid	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Hybrid
Derby	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Remote	Remote	Remote
Haysville	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Remote	Remote
Goddard	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Hybrid
Valley Center	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Hybrid	Remote	Remote	Remote

**Catholic Diocese of Wichita schools located in Sedgwick County only.*

- Substitute Teachers:** The need for and use of substitute teachers have routinely been part of the discussion of operating the district during COVID-19. Substitutes come and go every year. We have experienced more resignations than new hires this school year. However, the district still has more than 200 substitutes on the list, 85 of which have been hired since July. Of those who are no longer on the substitute list, some are now full-time USD 266 employees, some are now full-time teachers in other districts, some have accepted positions elsewhere in the industry and were substitute teaching during a period of transition, and some elected not to substitute this year due to personal health risks associated with COVID. Although the sub pool remains relatively large, 118 substitutes on the list have not accepted any assignments so far this year. We continue to recruit and onboard new substitutes daily to assist with the fulfillment shortages that occur on high teacher absence days. A recent temporary increase in substitute teacher compensation, especially for substitutes who commit to work for consecutive days, and a financial incentive for current paraeducators to obtain the necessary license to substitute teach when necessary should improve the district's ability to fill vacant classroom positions for the remainder of the school year.
- Filling Positions:** The district advertises vacant positions on the district employment webpage, the Kansas Education Employment Board, Facebook, Handshake, and ZipRecruiter. The district spends \$400 per month or more on job postings. Postings are rotated regularly. ZipRecruiter allows employers to invite candidates to apply for positions. This is actively managed.

The goals and objectives of Maize USD 266's efforts this year require balancing the varied needs of students, employees, families, and safety measures and expectations related to COVID during a constantly changing landscape. Teachers have continually learned, modified, and improved their strategies to try and meet the needs of students. Moving forward, the district will continue to evaluate and consider factors that will increase the likelihood of returning to face-to-face teaching and learning, including access to the COVID vaccine for our educators and employees and community case spread. The district will continue to work toward the most ideal teaching and learning experience possible while considering the health and safety of students, employees, and the OneMa1ze community.

The district's goal is to provide as much face-to-face instruction as possible for as many students as possible as soon as possible. This is the best way to teach and learn for almost all students and is what Maize does best. The hybrid and remote learning models are very difficult for many teachers, students, and families but provide a balance of health and safety and face-to-face instruction. Transitions are difficult, and decisions have been made to limit both the frequency and significance of the changes when one is needed.

With each decision made already this school year and with potential decisions in the coming weeks and months, the district weighs options with the long-term effects of decisions, including those related to:

- Academic, civic, and social development of students.
- Physical health of all members of the OneMa1ze school community.
- Mental health of students, staff members, and families.
- Recruitment and retention of outstanding teachers and staff members to continue to be one of the best school districts in Kansas.

Please visit www.usd266.com/T4TReopeningPlan for additional information, including the T4T Reopening Plan, FAQ published Dec. 18, Covid-19 Dashboard, OneMa1ze COVID Advisory Team (OCAT) updates, and Maize Board of Education meetings.