



WAUWATOSA SCHOOL DISTRICT

• Your Educational Community •

Superintendent's Office

May 13, 2020

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Dear Senators Kooyenga and Taylor, Representatives Vining, Myers and Hutton, and Gov. Evers:

I want to thank you for your ongoing support of the children in the State of Wisconsin. I'd also like to share with you how the Wauwatosa School District has continued to maintain our steadfast commitment to students and educators amid the ongoing public health emergency.

Over the past several months, our District's top priorities have been to:

- Ensure students' access to learning and services.
- Equip our staff with necessary tools and resources.
- Engage our students in online educational activities.

Detailed below are the actions taken to accomplish these goals - all of which were made with the best interest of our students and staff in mind.

Expediently equip students and staff with critical technology and services.

At a time when efficiency was most critical, we took action to minimize any potential gaps in learning for our students. Our 2019-20 District calendar had previously designated Friday, March 13 a Professional Learning Day, and we leveraged Monday, March 16 as an opportunity to communicate with staff and coordinate the launch of digital learning activities. The immediate action and cooperation of our leadership and educators allowed us to act quickly and **commence virtual learning activities on Tuesday, March 17.**

Immediately following building closures, we created technology kiosks to support **distribution of Chromebook computers to every student in grades JK-12** who had not previously been issued one. In just one day, we **distributed more than 1,800 devices** - and we've **provided more than 600 Chromebooks** to families over the subsequent weeks. Even today, we continue to distribute Chromebooks to families that prefer to utilize a District device instead of their personal computer. Amidst existing uncertainty about the 2020-21 school year and unknowns regarding the supply/demand chain for technology, we **proactively purchased 1,500 additional Chromebooks** to ensure our ability to provide working technology to new and incoming students.

To coincide with the initial distribution of technology, we created an online **24/7 support service** for families and students to submit requests, allowing our District to address any issues that arise. Over the past weeks, we've received an average of **35 support requests per day** via this method. Additionally, we established **contactless hardware support kiosks** on both the east and west sides of our District boundaries to enable students and families to pick up a device or bring failed or broken devices in for replacement or exchange. Until in-person attendance resumes, we will continue to staff our in-person kiosks throughout the week and provide online tech support to families and students.

Because internet access is critical to students' online engagement, our Technology Services Department purchased and distributed more than **200 mobile hotspots** for families in need so students could access a stable Internet connection. In the short interim between school closure and hotspot distribution, we **helped families take advantage of local internet providers' limited-time, free service offers.** Currently, our Technology Services Coordinator is actively participating in discussions with other Wisconsin public school districts, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and national internet service providers in an effort to **establish a long-term, practical and affordable program** that will provide internet access to families in need.

To ensure access to appropriate nutrition while students learn from home, we've continued to provide grab-and-go meals for **more than 1,500 students, totaling more than 19,000 meals served** since March 16, 2020.

We've also launched drive-through library services at four of our properties to facilitate ongoing access to supplemental educational materials. Since we've launched these services, we've **satisfied requests for more than 125 items.**

At the onset of the closure, special education staff members collaborated with families to **develop a distance learning plan for more than 800 students** with disabilities. These robust plans summarize the ongoing special education services delivered to students to support their access to digital learning. **Approximately 125 special education staff members continue to actively consult** with parents and students daily/weekly. Additionally, **students also receive 1:1 or small group specially-designed instruction and related services** including speech, occupational and physical therapy.

Deliver, assess and modify tools and resources available to our staff.

Staff has been instrumental in our District's collective ability to accommodate a virtual learning environment. Online classroom services and programs had been **previously integrated into the Wauwatosa School District educational experience**, and those tools were already in use by staff members. Although the majority of educators had been previously equipped with the hardware needed to operate remotely, **additional technology was distributed to those who did not previously require it**. We also **implemented a rapid professional development program** to allow staff to gain proficiency in incorporating online educational services and programs into their classrooms.

Maintain ongoing touchpoints with students across various platforms.

Our educators have been a driving force as we continue to engage our students and adapt to their ever-changing needs. Over the last eight weeks, we have leveraged a variety of methods and online platforms including **Google Classroom, Flipgrid, Moodle and Seesaw** to provide **daily lessons, deliver feedback on student learning activities and facilitate virtual class meetings**. More than **3,680 secondary students and 1,795 elementary students** have leveraged these online tools following closure of our buildings. Because elementary students are typically unable to independently navigate online applications for classroom work, our administration, teachers and counselors ensure their engagement via other methods such as family video conferencing, email, phone calls and more.

Track student engagement to measure efforts and inform move-forward strategies.

Through collaboration with Student Services, building leaders and educators, we've **developed a comprehensive approach to measuring student engagement** for elementary and secondary students. Staff actively **tracks key performance indicators on a weekly basis**, including:

Number of elementary students that have:

- Made contact via email, video conference or phone.
- Not made contact through any platform.
- Produced evidence of learning.

Percentage of secondary students who:

- Are fully engaged in all of their classes.
- Are not fully engaged.

- Have one incomplete.
- Have two or three incompletes.
- Have four or more incompletes.

Establish communication channels to proactively disseminate critical information.

We communicate with more than **1,000 District employees** via weekly email communications and a dedicated webpage. I am in the process of personally conducting **video conference check-ins with staff in each of our 14 buildings** to discuss move-forward strategies and solicit feedback. We also provide updates to more than **8,500 parents and guardians** in our District, which are sent via a weekly email, published on our website and posted on our social media channels. And to keep the community informed regarding School Board matters, we have begun **conducting all Board meetings online**.

We have kept all of our staff employed in hopes of contributing to our local economy. In addition to maintaining our payroll, we have used this opportunity to **expedite construction efforts at four of our elementary schools**, allowing contracted crews to continue moving forward with planned activities during this uncertain time. We **donated unused supplies** to our construction crews and other individuals who must be on-site at one of our buildings to support the ongoing efforts to flatten the curve. We are committed to supporting our community and embodying the Wauwatosa School District motto: Moving Forward Together.

I am sharing this information to provide insight – not only into the unexpected shift our staff and students have made to continue a commitment to learning, but to illustrate the additional costs our District has incurred. I respectfully request that you please consider supporting our District - and many other Districts across the country - as we continue to provide high-quality, meaningful education to Wisconsin's JK-12 students.



Phil Ertl
Superintendent