Schuyler Community Schools
ALL STAFF Zoom Meeting: April 17th Update
Friday, April 17, 2020 8:00 AM
Schuyler Community Schools Board Room
120 West 20th Street
Schuyler, NE 68661

I. Discussion Items

Communication

Effort Respect Responsibility Belief

One Good Thing! Please add your affirmations or "one good thing" in the chat box on the right.

MEETING AGENDA AND DISCUSSION TOPICS: This meeting included ALL-STAFF.

1. **Directed Health Measure:** We continue to operate under a state-wide Directed Health Measure for the remainder of the school year. While the directed health measure requires us to practice social distancing and limit groups to 10 or less, we are required to provide our students with continued access to education.

2. **Expanded Flexible Workdays:** We will continue with flexible workdays through next week. This provides you the option to work from school or home. I want to remind you that you need to continue to use this time, whether at school or at home to work on school related work, conducting online or zoom classes, reaching out to students and parents.

3. **School Calendar**: I have had several questions about our last scheduled workday. Our final workday is still May 21st (185 Day Contract). If we cut it short, you will not receive work credit/hours for a full year toward retirement.

4. **SCS Education Plan:** The third preschool through 12th grade education packets will need to be completed by Monday, April 27th and will be available for pickup on Thursday, April 30. Any remaining packets will be mailed on Friday, May 1st.

5. **4th Packet Preparation:** The fourth and final packet for preschool through 8th grade should be completed by Monday, May 11th, ready for pickup on Thursday, May 14th, remaining packets will be mailed on Friday, May 15th. The high school will not have a 4th packet as their job is to work with students on

returning all assigned work by Monday, May 18th. Final grades are due on Wednesday, May 20th. Your principals will be providing guidance on grading for 4th quarter and second semester final grades.

6. **Teacher/Administrator Work:** While you are busy working on your educational packets, attending and/or hosting zoom meetings, working in your classrooms, etc... additional work items to be completed on your own include:
a. 2020-21 Teacher Requisitions.
b. 2020-21 Recommended Handbook Changes.
c. Curriculum work assigned by Dr. Gibbons and your principals.
d. Continue listing support staff jobs and verifying completed work.
e. Close up your room for the summer.
f. Correct/return completed student work. (9-12)

7. **Staff Leave:** Remember, if you use contracted leave (**PTO, Sick, or Vacation**) or if support staff work at school, no work assignment is required. However, if you are working from home, we expect continued work. Administrators and support staff, working from home, must list their work assignment daily. Please make sure you have a job assigned and cleared by your supervisor. Teachers and administrators, if you post and assign a job, you must also mark the job as complete in order for us to verify pay.

8. **Food Service:** We continue to experience a great need for our food service program in our community. Thank you to the food service staff for your continued work in this program. Any staff who want to work in this program may sign up at the middle school.

9. **Backpack Program:** Staff interested in working in helping out with the backpack program on Friday mornings can sign up at the middle school.

10. **Teacher Requisitions:** Please continue to finalize your classroom requisitions for 2020-21 school year. Deadline for classroom requisitions is May 1st.

11. **Prom, Awards Night, Graduation:** High school administrators are working on options for the three main year end events. Attached is an update from Commissioner Blomstedt on "Graduation Ceremony Guidance and Interpretation". See attachment below.

12. **Summer School:** There will be no summer school in June. We are considering options for July summer school. At this time, it looks like our best option may be to provide virtual, remote, and/or online classes. We will make a decision by May 4th and begin recruiting staff interested in developing a three-week program.

13. **COVID-19 Peak:** It is anticipated that the peak for COVID-19 in Nebraska will be within the next month (4 weeks). Keep in mind that our number of possible positive tests could increase in our county, community and families. Please also be aware of the possible increased stress and anxiety in our families affected either by the virus or changes in their employment. If you are aware of any families that are struggling, please let us know so that we can respond to their needs.

14. **Statewide Survey:** Included below is a state-wide survey on topics of interest on how schools across Nebraska are operating under the COVID-19 school closure.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR:

- 65.2% of districts are sticking with their adopted academic calendar and not modifying contract days.
- 17.9% have moved their final contract day up and are concluding the school year early.
- 11.6% have not made a determination on final contract day.

GRADUATION:

- 46.6% of districts have not yet made a determination regarding graduation date.
- 15% are planning on a July in-person graduation ceremony.
- 3% are planning on a June in-person graduation ceremony.
- 2.9% are planning on a May virtual-only graduation ceremony.

GRADING:

- 27.4% will issue grades based upon letter grade earned by students prior to the mandated school closure.
- 18.4% are maintaining their adopted grading system for the full semester.
- 13.6% will issue second semester grades as Pass-Fail only.
- Nearly 40% of respondents indicate some combination of maintaining a letter grade with a Pass/Fail option or the opportunity for students to improve their grade during fourth quarter but not receive a lower grade than that earned by end of third quarter / prior to closure.

SUMMER SCHOOL:

44.2% of districts will not be offering summer school.
28.9% of districts are planning on a remote-only summer school program.
26.9% of districts are planning on running a site-based summer school program.

Key issues and topics identified by respondents for which guidance is sought from NDE:

- Rule 10 Waivers
- Reading Act/ statutory waivers
- How ADA and attendance figures are to be calculated
- Whether NDE will issue guidance on grading during this period

- CARES Act funding and expenditure guidance for schools
- End-of-year state reporting requirements and how these will be handled

15. **Thank You:** I know teaching at a distance or remotely is a tough job. Thank you for your continued effort to reach out to our students, provide carefully planned homework packets to keep them engaged, supporting our families at home, and caring for our kids. Special thank you to Michael Trotter for sharing "What if?" See attachment below.

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D., Commissioner

NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.education.ne.gov
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
TEL 402.471.2295
FAX 402.471.0117

April 16, 2020

To: Nebraska Public School Superintendents, Non-Public School Administrators, and ESU Administrators

CC: State Board of Education, Commissioner's Cabinet, and NDE Leadership

RE: Commissioner's Message Regarding Graduation Ceremony Guidance and Interpretation

There have been numerous requests to address and provide guidance on local graduation ceremonies and celebrations for the high school Class of 2020. Although both the Governor and I have spoken on this topic, and reiterated in the Governor's press conference today, there are many attempts to appropriately recognize graduating seniors. The Governor and I have advised that any in-person graduation ceremony or recognition be scheduled in late summer (July or August) and only with the approval of local health officials. Some schools with less than ten seniors have found ways to host ceremonies and comply with social distancing guidelines and Directed Health Measures. Those scenarios will not be possible for the majority of schools. However, several school districts have sought to create a virtual graduation or recognition that is permissible ***if*** it does not violate the requirements set forth in the Directed Health Measure Order 2020-010.

The current and statewide Directed Health Measure (DHM) Order 2020-010 addresses both "gatherings" and "school activities" and the following are excerpts from that DHM Order.

Gatherings

1. Gatherings are hereby prohibited;
   A gathering is defined as any event or convening that brings together more than ten (10) patrons, customers or other invitees, excluding staff, in a single room or single space at the same time, including but not limited to, pre-schools, daycare facility (including in-home facilities), gymnasium, fitness center, auditorium, stadium, arena, large event conference room, meeting hall, library, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. This also includes weddings and funerals, as well as parades, fairs, festivals, concerts, auto racing and other indoor and outdoor events.

Related to Schools:

1. All schools; public, private and parochial: are hereby ordered to cease all in person instruction, and all extra-curricular activities except for: remote learning, child care services, meal distribution, distribution of educational materials and supplies, general building or physical plant operations and maintenance, and residential services may be continued as needed or necessary
2. Schools are defined as public, private, and parochial elementary and secondary schools

Six Rules:

The Governor has also emphasized six rules to keep Nebraska healthy:

1. Stay home. No non-essential errands and no social gatherings. Respect the ten-person limit.
2. Socially distance your work. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
3. Shop alone and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
4. Help kids follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports. And no playgrounds.
5. Help [senior citizens] stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.
6. Exercise daily at home or with an appropriately socially-distanced activity.

Local Public Health Officials Consensus View:

Yesterday, I met with local public health officials from across the state to discuss the issue in some depth. Although I have recommended that school officials work with local public health officials, it has become clear that our officials are far too busy to address each and every creative idea presented. In turn, I asked that public health officials present a consensus view so I could better advise and guide school and community leaders. There were several concerns discussed that included breaking the spirit of the DHM by creating quasi-public events that may provide a false sense of security about public health and undermine the spirit of the Directed Health Measures and the Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy in this moment.

Commissioner's Interpretation and Guidance for Graduation for the Class of 2020:

As such I make the following recommendation to school officials that is supported by Nebraska's public health officials:

- The limits on gatherings apply to all types of graduation ceremonies.
- Graduation ceremonies are interpreted to be "extra-curricular activities" per the DHM and are ordered to cease.
- Graduation recognitions are recommended to be done remotely by virtual means and avoid convening small groups or other efforts that attempt to undermine the intent of the order.

- All in person graduation ceremonies and celebrations must meet the statewide Directed Health Measure Order 2020-010 or should be postponed until such a time that the statewide order is lifted and that subsequent orders would clearly permit such gatherings.
- Efforts to dismiss or subvert the Directed Health Measure may be considered a violation of school accreditation or approval rules related to health and safety and may be considered a violation of the ethical standards for certificated school officials.

Although I join you in the critical need to recognize students and families who have much to celebrate, I also ask you to join me in celebrating in fashions and in times that better allow Nebraskans to Stay Home and Keep Healthy.

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.

Commissioner of Education

If they cancel the rest of the school year, students would miss 2.5 months of education. Many people are concerned about students falling behind because of this. Yes, they may fall behind when it comes to classroom education...

But what if...
What if instead of falling “behind", this group of kids are ADVANCED because of this? Hear me out.
What if they have more empathy, they enjoy family connection, they can be more creative and entertain themselves, they love to read, they love to express themselves in writing.
What if they enjoy the simple things, like their own backyard and sitting near a window in the quiet.
What if they notice the birds and the dates the different flowers emerge, and the calming renewal of a gentle rain shower?
What if this generation are the ones to learn to cook, organize their space, do their laundry, and keep a well run home?
What if they learn to stretch a dollar and to live with less?
What if they learn to plan shopping trips and meals at home.
What if they learn the value of eating together as a family and finding the good to share in the small delights of the everyday?
What if they are the ones to place great value on our teachers and educational professionals, librarians, public servants and the previously invisible essential support workers like truck drivers, grocers, cashiers, custodians, logistics, and health care workers and their supporting staff, just to name a few of the millions taking care of us right now while we are sheltered in place?
What if among these children, a great leader emerges who had the benefit of a slower pace and a simpler life to truly learn what really matters in this life?

What if they are AHEAD?