



WE BACK THE BEARS

The mission of the Barron Area School District is to ensure all students reach their dreams while making a positive impact on the world.

May 14, 2020

Dear Senator Bewley,

I hope this letter finds you and your families well.

The purpose of this communication is to continue telling you our story here at the Barron Area School District. Our hope is that our message will inspire decisions in Madison which will provide our schools with legislation that contains practical procedures and adequate financial support for our work as we educate the leaders of tomorrow. We also wish to continue to have the opportunities to be involved in these crucial conversations as we circumnavigate this unfamiliar terrain together.

On the afternoon of Friday, March 13, 2020, we began working with all of our necessary constituents in order to prepare for the closure. Staff worked throughout the weekend to prepare teachers, students and their families for what we expected to be a three-week closure. Our work included preparations intended to best support the academic, social-emotional and physical wellbeing of our students and staff in a distance learning setting.

In order to cut right to the chase, one obvious concern is how our state and nation will effectively continue to deal with the economic impacts of COVID-19, which have been so widely felt. At BASD we continue to monitor and project the litany of impacts our federal and state changes could have on our district. Many school funding implications still remain unknown, but we do know our priority will not change: doing what is in the best interest of our students and staff including our larger constituency.

The reality is, we will miss 30% of on-site education, 52/180 days. There are, of course, inherent areas of costs that are not realized, including fuel cost for our transportation department, substitute teaching costs, daily educational supply needs, and spring sports associated costs. On the contrary, there are many additional costs that are incurred considering the changes in how education is delivered overnight and how we need to service families, including the cost of additional virtual necessary software, mobilizing 300+ staff members to efficiently educate off-site, creating/delivering and facilitating off-site lessons, and food security distributions. Food security is necessary for many families, but the traditional Free and Reduced food service funding is not applicable because it requires identification of exactly who is receiving the meals. Schools are navigating alternative routes of reimbursement for the food distributions, but in the end, it will be an added cost during the closure as we are not receiving the traditional reimbursements.



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The Barron Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap.

Overall, the primary cost driver of our annual educational budget is staff. BASD has continued to pay all of our staff members because there still is the expectation of serving our kids and families. Teachers are teaching remotely and holding all necessary collaborations. Custodial staff took on the laborious task of deep cleaning and disinfecting all six buildings within our district along with completion of backed up work orders and future facilities planning. Food service staff and the transportation department are facilitating ongoing food security, serving over 20,000 meals to date, with deliveries and drop offs of curriculum and assessment materials. Our technology department is providing tech support, and paraprofessionals are helping with accommodations for students. Overall, there are absolutely no dull moments for our administrators and supervisors who are planning for multiple eventualities moving forward.

In the midst of this, we learned that the Safer at Home Order would be extended through the end of the school year with facilities and grounds closed through June 30th. This resulted in more challenging decision-making with solutions that will, most likely, have unforeseen financial implications.

We then began working through such issues as what to do:

- To ensure fiscal responsibility to our entire constituency without any concrete information as to what 2020-21 budgeting shortfall will occur.
- To develop new policies and procedures and to provide technology for virtual board meetings in order to sustain transparent and effective governance through this crisis.
- To ensure the delivery of our Golden/essential learning standards to all our students which, for many, is a new and unpredictable distance learning world.
- To find solutions for remediation and intervention for students who drastically fall behind their peers due to limited parent involvement to support their virtual learning setting.
- To make sure that students and staff continue to learn and teach in an emotionally safe and accountable environment.
- To insure expectations of professional composure and complete staff evaluations.
- To protect our district from new liabilities that may or may not be attached to essential business according to our governed response.
- To search for equitable solutions to service families who do not have access to the internet throughout the closure.
- To maintain services for all students, including mandated services to special education, bilingual, gifted and talented, economically disadvantaged, and homeless students using new methods of teletherapy, which also brings additional equity issues to the floor.
- To continue support for students suffering from mental health difficulties and provide service partnerships.
- To provide a continuum of staff development for all of the new solutions required by our dedicated educators, so they can respond to the many needs of students.
- To find meaningful ways to celebrate graduation for the Class of 2020 as well as all other important building level transitions our students are experiencing.
- To make summer school instruction available.
- To understand the repercussions of our new assessment procedures and credit requirements for our graduates and for those classes below, which will have the least negative impact on student's future decisions.
- To plan for the uncertainty of what school may look like for a September opening.
- To stick to our original 2019-20 annual goals that need to come to fruition in order to keep our strategic planning on target.

Member of Congress

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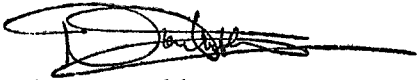
We are fortunate at BASD to have a staff that is committed, positive, resilient, solution-based, flexible and team-orientated. Therefore, making these principled decisions are seamless in that we are sticking to BASD's mission: ensuring that all students reach their dream while making a positive impact on the world.

In order for us to stay the course, we need our legislators on board realizing just how important our work is to the future state of our country. We are essential in every sense of the word, as education is the greatest equalizer for our youth and is the gateway to a promising future for all.

We look forward to the day we see our buses pulling up once again and our buildings are energized with the spirit, hope and energy of our youth.

On behalf of all of us here at BASD, I would like to end by extending well wishes to you, along with your family and colleagues, as we work together to make paramount decisions during this extraordinary and historic time in our lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Tremblay", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Diane Tremblay
Barron Area School District
Superintendent