



May 27, 2020

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I hope this letter finds you, your family, and your colleagues well. I would like to provide you with an update from the Franklin Public School District as we address the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Franklin Public Schools engaged over 4750 students in remote learning during the COVID19 pandemic. Preliminary engagement numbers tracked through work completion and student login to learning management systems indicate that over 97% of students have engaged in the essential learning identified in core academic and elective areas. Within 48 hours of school closure, as a school district we were able to deploy a virtual environment for our students in grades 5-12 that continues to sustain to date. We engaged our 4K-4th grade students in remote learning activities immediately after school was shut down.

As a school district, we worked with families in grade 4K-4 to distribute needed hotspots for internet access, Chromebooks, and a detailed plan to launch a virtual environment at those grade levels within two weeks of school shutdown. We continued to provide services in order to meet the academic and social/emotional needs of our most vulnerable students, including interventions, special education services, and English Language Learner support. To date, all students in Franklin Public Schools have internet access, a school-issued computer, and engage daily in synchronous and asynchronous learning with their teachers and classmates.

We are proud of the resilience our community, students, and teachers have shown through this time of uncertainty, keeping learning at the forefront for our students. Despite the limitations of distance learning, as a school district, learning is occurring, and every day we are responding to student needs.

When the District began teaching students virtually, our food service department also adapted to the situation. They immediately began providing lunches that could be picked up by our families. Although Franklin usually has a relatively low percentage of free and reduced meals, we quickly realized that more students would soon qualify for free meals based on their parents' workplaces being shut down. Our food service director worked with the Department of Public Instruction to get permission to change our food service program so that we could provide free meals for any student that needed one. Over the time

that our students have been instructed virtually, the District has provided about 10,000 free meals to the children of our community.

Though Franklin staff and parents continue to do their best to provide meaningful learning experiences for students, the realities of the COVID-19 virus have increased variance for students related to the quality and depth of learning. Many Franklin parents are working full time from home or their place of employment, and still trying to ensure their children are engaging with essential learning. Those families with more flexibility in their schedules have undoubtedly been able to engage to a deeper level.

For students who have disengaged, the lack of face to face contact has made the prospect of reconnecting these students difficult. As a result, there are students throughout the district who have not engaged at all with essential learning tasks. This will no doubt widen achievement gaps as we move into the fall.

Additionally, we have been unable to replicate the full learning experience associated with a face to face environment. At the elementary level, subject areas such as science and social studies have been reduced to ensure time to focus on reading, writing, and math. At all levels, the student activities, clubs, sports, and school day gatherings that have become a fundamental component of the overall learning experience have not occurred or occurred virtually. The absence of these experiences has added to the feelings of isolation experienced by many of our students and families.

Despite these challenges, the Franklin Public School District has also fully embraced the opportunity to grow and learn from this experience. At a fundamental level, we have learned a lot about our capacity to solve problems, reflect, and improve. We have a better understanding of how to facilitate virtual learning, and how to ensure families are able to overcome barriers outside our walls. We will undoubtedly be a better school system as a result of this experience. Even now, we are applying these key learning elements to the development of a fall transition plan, that will further ensure a safe and effective learning environment for all students.

With that said, we need your support to ensure that whatever the future holds with the spread of COVID-19, we are working together for the safety and wellbeing of our students and families. The decisions we make about preparing our students to be productive citizens impact all of us. If we fail to support education now, our economic recovery will take far longer. Providing educational support and resources builds strong economies and prosperous communities, goals that I am certain we all share.

Please reach out with any questions you may have. Our door is always open to meeting with you at any time, including virtually.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy Mueller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Judy Mueller, PhD
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