



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE

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May 22, 2020

Senator Chris Larson
Room 20 South
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Representative Jessie Rodriguez
Room 204 North
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Larson and Representative Rodriguez,

I am pleased to write to you today to share the story of the School District of South Milwaukee and how our school community has and continues to progress throughout the coronavirus pandemic. March 12th was a crazy day, one that completely changed the landscape of servicing our students and community. We relied and continue to rely heavily on our local Health Department officials to keep our school community safe. Our communication to our community has been ongoing and will continue to be ongoing as we evolve through this pandemic.

Our priority during this pandemic is first to ensure the safety, to the best of our ability, of our students, staff and community. We have followed the lead of health field experts and will continue to do so. With that said, we have not shied away from our Mission, “We, along with our community, commit to deliberate excellence for all learners by engaging and educating the whole person to succeed in a dynamic society.” We, now more than ever, have been working with our school community to engage our students and to continue learning, to the best of our ability, during this pandemic. Our parents have been very good partners in this process and for that we are forever grateful to them.

We have developed a three pronged strategy to ensure that we are advancing our Mission during this pandemic. First, we have made available technologies to our students that will allow for engagement to happen. These technologies include chromebooks, wireless access points, subscriptions to online resources, and intuitive software that promotes communication between stakeholders. Second, we have continued to provide education and resources to our students. This includes lessons that are delivered via technology; however, it is important to note, the hardest item to address via technology is the social emotional needs of our students. We feel very vulnerable at this moment having been physically disconnected from our students for such a long time. We have activated our partnership with Saint A's to help address the most obvious areas of mental health needs, but we know that in order to be fully effective we need to remove the physical barrier that is COVID-19. Third, we have committed to strong and consistent

communication among stakeholders. This includes two way communication between the district, school, staff, parents and students.

We have had great success in making sure our youth have access to breakfast and lunch throughout the pandemic. We have served over 11,000 breakfasts and 11,000 lunches and have made them available at three different sites. We plan to continue this throughout the summer months and hope to be back to normal operations come September. The School District of South Milwaukee has taken advantage of any time available to prepare our staff and buildings to be ready to bring students back as soon as we are able to.

I would like to close with a huge shout out to our staff. Our staff have really come through for our community. When I say staff, I mean EVERYONE has taken the time to rally support for our school community. They have reached out to students, parents and in some cases the general community; one such instance happened in each of our neighborhoods with "school parades" where staff took to the streets in their decorated vehicles and spread the pride of the Bobcats, Wolves, Lions, and Leopards. It was very rewarding to see the anticipation of families that lined their front yards and show their school pride. Our staff have reached out to hospitals and local first responders in the area, and supplied them with masks, cleaning agents, and other items that could help in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please know that you, as a representative of South Milwaukee, have a lot to be proud of here. The School Board, staff and students are very grateful for your representation, and want you to know that our community is committed to moving forward and closing this chapter in our history.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Weiss".

Dr. Jeffrey Weiss
Superintendent