

ALMA AREA SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALMA

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June 1, 2020

Dear Representative Pronchinske;

I hope this letter finds you, your family, and your fellow colleagues well. It is certainly hard to believe that over two months ago we started this new educational journey together. I know that you have certainly had to make many new and challenging decisions as you navigate these uncharted waters. We obviously are still faced with a lot of uncertainties and many difficult decisions are yet to be made, but I was hoping to just take a few minutes of your time to share with you how the Alma School District has worked together to address the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like Districts across our beautiful state, the Alma School District responded to this pandemic with the determination and confidence that we will succeed, and more importantly, that every single one of our students will succeed. We were challenged and we responded. Our response time was instantaneous. On Monday, March 16th we had a "traditional brick and mortar" school day. The following day we held an optional E-Learning virtual practice day where students had the ability to practice from home or they could come onsite and practice with their teachers. By Wednesday, all of our students were working remotely and our E-Learning endeavor was underway.

Our E-Learning program was certainly multi-faceted and was differentiated by grade level and even geared to each individual student. Our preschoolers through 2nd grade were provided with weekly learning packets and daily connections occurred through phone calls home, weekly videos and a host of other means. All of our students in grades 3-12 had school issued Chromebooks available, and our teachers used a variety of online platforms to connect with each of their students. Google classrooms were built overnight. Daily zoom meetings and google meetings became a solid infrastructure for our teachers, for our students, and for our families. Individualized phone calls and face time sessions were scheduled and utilized. Screencastify and YouTube, along with other video platforms were used for teachers to create their own instructional videos to share with their students and families. I could go on and on about the amazing work that was done by our staff to provide high level instruction with challenging and attainable expectations during these unprecedented times. However, the most important thing to note is that we connected with every single one of our students during this time. All 248 PreK-12th grade students were connected. Despite some rural connectivity issues, along with other roadblocks that we encountered, we persevered.

While we immediately pushed forward and provided all of our students with continuity in their education, we also quickly established an amazing breakfast and lunch program where we delivered meals daily. At one point we were providing meals to almost 200 children throughout our rural communities. That's over 80% of our

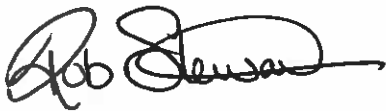
children. Our food service staff, in conjunction with our office staff and many other support staff provided our families with breakfast and lunches that went above and beyond. Families were provided with a variety of both cold and warm meal options. The support and appreciation that we received from our families, as well as local businesses was absolutely amazing.

I could not be more proud of how we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic as a District and as a community. Our staff, students and parents were absolutely amazing, and our community support was tremendous. However, this is not to say that this journey has not been without difficulties. In addition, no matter how successful our E-Learning platform was, there is no way to replicate the value of time spent inside our classrooms where students are engaged in healthy discussion and inquiry in their pursuit of knowledge. Face to face time with our staff, and with fellow classmates and friends, is an essential component that simply cannot be replaced.

In closing, I can assure you that the Alma School District will continue to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of all our students. Every day, we continue to strategize and game plan for an unpredictable educational future. We continue to plan and prioritize expenditure increases from technology needs, to transportation and staffing increases, along with purchasing the equipment necessary to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all of our students and staff when we are able to return to school. Although it can certainly become frustrating as the moving target of what the future holds continues to move at a rapid pace, we will continue to push forward. I hope that this letter gives you a little more insight into how our District responded. I also hope as we all move forward that you will take into consideration the incredible lengths to which not only our District and staff have went to, but educators across our wonderful state have went to in supporting all students and families.

I hope that you and your family remain healthy and well. If you have any questions, I welcome your calls or emails so that I can explain our work and answer any questions you may have. Make it a great day!

Sincerely,

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

Rob Stewart
District Administrator