



June 3, 2020
Senator Janis Ringhand
Sen.Ringhand@legis.wisconsin.gov
State Capitol Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Ringhand,

Thank you for your continued leadership during these extremely challenging and uncertain times. Like others throughout the State, in the Edgerton School District we have had to navigate these uncharted waters without a compass or map. Decisions are made and then information changes requiring our plans to be revised. At times it feels like we're shooting at a moving target. The COVID-19 pandemic and mandated school closures occurred quickly and changed how we fundamentally address all District operations.

This spring, in a matter of weeks, our staff pivoted from a normal teaching routine to moving into a complete virtual environment. This was a monumental undertaking that was achieved seamlessly as a result of our teacher's relentless pursuit to serve the students and families in Edgerton. I was amazed by the interactions our staff had regularly with students and families via Zoom conferences, lesson plans with links for activities, emails, postcards, and phone calls. They clearly went above and beyond to assist our families with such difficult conditions. The commitment and dedication our staff demonstrated for their students and families was admirable and second to none.

During this same time parents had to adjust normal work and home routines to new ones which now included serving as the lead teacher for their child. I know this balancing act was challenging and created additional stress for all of our families. Yet, everyone persevered and did the best they could and our students benefited as a result of the heroic efforts of our staff and parents working collectively. Everyone was asked to take on a herculean task and they did so with grit and determination. I am proud to serve as the District Administrator of such a supportive and hardworking community.

This spring we surveyed our students and families regarding the virtual learning transition. The overall feedback was incredibly supportive of the work our staff has done to adjust to a learning environment. Students and parents commented how helpful and accommodating our staff has been throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In addition to addressing the academic needs of our students, our staff needed to adjust how we meet the social/emotional learning needs of students. Teachers contacted students regularly to check-in and provided families home schedules, suggested routines, and activities to integrate into the daily routine. Many staff members are responding to the needs of students by scheduling 1:1 meetings, coordinating support and creating specific check-in times for students who are struggling. It has been our goal to let families know that they are not alone.

During the past three months we also had to revise plans for serving daily meals to more than 400 students. Staff assisted with the preparation and delivery of meals daily for our families to ensure proper nutrition was provided to all in need. This has been vital to the health of our students.

Communicating with families, staff and the community has been a top priority. Our COVID-19 links include coronavirus information, safety tips, mental health resources, meal information, remote learning resources, and various events such as the Senior Awards ceremony and Virtual Graduation.

I am proud of all the efforts our staff have made to provide ongoing support to students and families. This has not been accomplished without a variety of challenges, obstacles, disappointments and setbacks that we work through together. The cancellation of sports, concerts, and end-of-year events are opportunities our students lost. This was extremely detrimental to our seniors who lost not only various celebrations and events, but also trips to Germany and the Edgerton timeless tradition of the trip to Washington D.C.

As we look to the future, there will be greater demands placed on staff to acquire new skills in order to address new expectations. In preparation for the fall, all of our staff will become Google Level I certified in order to provide families one platform to access information and monitor their child's progress. Our need to have highly trained staff has never been greater than for the coming school year. All of these changes will pose new challenges and put additional stress on our current resources.

To achieve our timely and vital response to implementing a virtual learning environment, like most districts throughout the state, Edgerton incurred expenses that simply were not budgeted for in this fiscal year. For example, additional chromebooks for a one-to-one environment, remote internet access hotspots, individual student resources because classroom sets were no longer an option for sharing, and cleaning equipment to ensure a safe work environment for our essential workers. Some legislatures believe there was an inherent cost savings as a result of the school closure. In actuality, the opposite is true. Our expenditures increased overall to respond to the changes resulting from COVID-19.

As state leaders, it is important for you to know the actual impact of the pandemic on school districts throughout Wisconsin. As we resume operations in the fall, we anticipate more resources will be needed to safely reopen our schools. This is not a time to freeze or cut budgets, this is a time to support our essential services with the necessary revenue to prepare our schools for a safe reopening. This is a time we all need to work collectively to support our schools and provide the children and families the quality education they have come to know and expect. There is no other option.

I am fortunate to be part of a school district family that is relentless in our advocacy for students. The Edgerton School District staff are dedicated, hard-working and extremely caring

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individuals. Our students and families have persevered during these past four months. I'm amazed by how everyone has come together in one collaborative effort to support our children. Roll Tide!

Sincerely,



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