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March 20, 2020

Colleagues –

There really are no words available that can effectively convey my gratitude and appreciation for all that you've done for the students and families of our community. I ask you to take a moment to reflect—think about what you were doing on Friday morning, March 13, 2020. Now, think about what you've accomplished and the mountains you moved since Governor Evers declared the public health emergency due to COVID-19 closing all schools in Wisconsin.

Over the past week, our SDJ colleagues rallied to:

- Develop a plan to implement and provide short-term online learning resources and opportunities for our families;
- Scour and source internet connected devices so that every student is able to have one at home to access the online learning resources;
- Create and implement a plan to disinfect all district buildings;
- Provide access to free “grab & go” lunch and breakfast packages for all children 18 years old and younger in Janesville;
- Establish a “text” system to allow families to order those “grab & go” meals that will be delivered by SDJ staff;
- Develop logistical miracles to collect, package, and prepare student belongings for easy pick-up/retrieval;
- Keep families and staff informed of the almost constantly changing situation; and
- Exhibit the professional attitude, service heart, and concern for students, families, and colleagues that you are all known for.

Undoubtedly, there are too many examples to list here of the fantastic work everyone put in to make Wednesday, March 18, 2020 less stressful for students and families. A quick review of some of the social media sites for our schools/districts shows that the community joins me in appreciation of your efforts:

- So Thankful for the staff and being positive and kind. That's a BIG plus and makes things so much easier for all.
- I wasn't sure what to expect this morning but I was so impressed by how streamlined everything was. I also appreciate that you guys had us use hand sanitizer when we came in. Thank you for all your hard work!
- I think that today went really well. Although this whole thing feels so strange for everyone, you all did a great job. Thank you!

I could go on, but, I think you get the picture. As one of your colleagues said:

*“Very proud of the district I teach in. The leadership has been on top of this quarantine and likely working 24/7 to organize student meals (even home deliveries) and a district online learning portal within days of the announcement of school closures from the governor. Our district staff, like always, rallied. In 2 days we packed our student’s belongings, devices, classrooms and buildings and got the tools in the students’ hands to ensure continued learning at home.”*

So, thank you, 1,000 times over, thank you. I hope that you are all able to take a moment for yourselves, and relax, and be happy knowing you have done great work. There is a famous poster with an image of leaves falling at the UW-Madison Memorial Union terrace, that includes the following: "Let us linger here awhile in the foolishness of things."—Author unknown.

I encourage you to linger over spring break in the ‘foolishness’ of family time, recharging your batteries. We don’t know how long our schools will be closed for students, but we do know that after spring break, we will all be back at work so we can deliver on our promise to ensure our students are learning, keeping them on the path towards graduation.

We are gearing up our online educational presence – teachers will be creating online learning activities for all students. We will be using the week after spring break to really focus on and develop the plans to ensure that our students will continue learning; that educational objectives are met, and that our seniors will graduate. For our non-instructional staff, rest assured, there is plenty of work to do for all willing to help out. While some of the work options are different from traditional duties and responsibilities, to be clear, if you are willing to work, you will be paid. Stay tuned for more information soon from Assistant Superintendent Scott Garner with more details.

No matter what role you have in our School District, we are all educators. Looking back at what we accomplished this past week really doesn’t surprise me. The SDJ team – all of us—have always shown their passion and dedication to our students and families, and I know you will continue to do so even as we embark on the last few months of a school year that few of us could have imagined just last week.

Looking forward to joining you as we make the end of the 2019-20 school year more incredible than any school year closing ever!

With admiration and appreciation,



Steve Pophal, Superintendent