

Lessons Learned About Education During a Pandemic
March 2, 2021
Parents

Superintendent Miller shared with parents that district leaders are already planning for the next school year. Making decisions related to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is not as easy as it may seem. He explained that once the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a new protocol or guideline, Gov. DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) must accept the decision. Once that occurs, our local health commissioner at the Butler County General Health District must then accept ODH's decision and recommendations before schools can implement them.



Mr. Miller expressed his thanks to the Lakota Board of Education for its support throughout the pandemic. Members wanted the district to offer both in-person and virtual options this year and they want to continue this practice for next year as well.

Question 1: What could have gone better this year? Please turn your critiques into a positive request/ask of the district.

- Technology is very distracting for the younger kids. Is there any type of filter on students' devices to block access to sites?
 - VLO families can email VLOTech@lakotaonline.com with questions.
- Busing cancellations: Please have principals let parents know about any busing issues as early as possible and how long the interruption in service will be, if known.
- Is there a way to track our school bus?
- How can we make it more attractive for substitute teachers to want to work here?

- The response time from VLO teachers is slow. I understand that there's a lot going on, but it can be very frustrating.
- Students with disabilities who are enrolled in VLO: we created a plan going into VLO. The teachers and staff have been amazing in trying to meet the needs of the student. We're used to in-person supports, but now we don't have them. While he's doing well, it's still a struggle. All of his aides have been taken away from VLO supports. Can we have aides back? Even if it's a virtual aide? In person, aides play a huge role in his success at school.
- More synchronous learning with VLO. My seventh grader wishes it was more. It's not just interaction with teachers, but also students. When on a Zoom call, students have their screens off and it is just the teacher talking. The social interaction component is missing
- My seventh grader is concerned about going back in person next year. He doesn't really know the people in his class, even though they've been on Zooms all year.
 - Mr. Miller noted that re-integrating VLO students back into in person is something the district is working on.
- My in-person daughter is thriving, but I've missed being able to volunteer and be in the school.
- It is difficult for quarantined students to keep up. There is no school interaction even though you're not VLO.
- There are attendance issues recording absences due to quarantines and isolation.
- Class sizes are too big at Creekside and Endeavor. There are challenges with the number of students, traditional seating and trying to follow social distancing guidelines.
- Without having parent volunteers to help, there are no small groups.
- Will there be more teachers back in the buildings next year to help with class sizes?
- From a substitute teacher's perspective, it doesn't seem like teachers have enough support with aides - especially at the younger buildings.
- Younger students missed out a lot socially last spring due to remote learning. It's good that we're back in person.
- How is the filtration/HVAC system in the schools?
- Parents seem to be talking about class ratios more often in the ThoughtExchange about facilities and on social media. I think it's because of the lack of volunteers in those grades and parent involvement drops as they get older. It doesn't seem like class sizes are really that much larger than they have been in the past.
- The length of videos for VLO's younger students see too long. The kids lose interest and then parents have to watch and re-teach.
- I feel like not all of the schools are doing the same things. Not every school is allowing kids to play on the playground. There's also a rumor that one high school is letting parents in but that's not supposed to happen.
 - An example is that one school doesn't have recess aides so teachers go out with their classes, but another school has recess aides. Why is that?
- It's so hard to not be able to engage with families because of safety. What can we do to re-engage our kids, our families? It's a challenge.

Question 2: How can we re-socialize our kids if/when they return to the classroom? What are your requests for next year?

- The summer bus tour was a lot of fun and was outdoors.
- For transitioning back into the classroom, it would help VLO kids feel like they're not weird because they went to VLO this year. They may have a fear that in-person kids may judge them.
 - Mr. Miller noted that we implemented staggered starts to the school year to start building relationships and easing the transition back to school.
- There are concerns for kids who haven't been in the school and may not know the building, figuring out the lockers, etc.
- One school zoomed VLO kids into the classrooms if they were going to return to the school after the semester break.
- Will ninth graders have a chance to transition into high school at the main campus? Like orientation?
- Next year, in-person kids will have to learn how to go back to "normal" (we hope). For example, one-way hallways and staircases will go back to being two-way, not having block schedules every day.

Question 3: What was great about this year? How can we build on that next year?

- The use of technology.
- The accessibility of lessons.
- Teachers thinking outside of the box to meet the needs of all students.
- Teachers encouraging students to take more responsibility for their work...they CAN do it.
- We have more flexibility and teachers have the ways to make that appropriate for all students.
- As a parent, being able to see the videos so I understand how my son is being taught - the little techniques and being able to talk to my son and expand on that at home.
- Kids are resilient. We can try new things and they can roll with it.
- With Lakota being such a big district, this big of a change is very difficult, but the district has done a great job. Even though there may be inconveniences, the district figures it out.
- It's ok to take a risk.
- We need to be cognizant of kids who may not have supports at home - we need to find that balance.
- Older students wish to have more live lectures instead of just videos - this is one benefit of being in person.
- Lakota has been very clear from the start - being in person and offering VLO.
- There's been a lot of communication and transparency. If parents don't know what's going on, they're not looking.
- The district has been incredibly transparent.
- Being able for kids who are absent to stay up to date with work has been great.

- The work put into band, chorus, gym is appreciated and has made the year feel a little normal.
- More work with MindPeace and in-school therapists would be great - small groups during XH and mindfulness rooms.
- Offering telehealth options with MindPeace therapists for VLO students has been great.
- Have you asked the teachers what will help them?
 - This community conversation will take place on Thursday.
- I think Lakota has done a great job.