Lewiston-Porter Central School District

Aiming Higher

Dear LP Community:

Happy Friday. What a beautiful October day! I hope you have some time to get outside and enjoy the day.

COVID-19 Testing
Yesterday, the Niagara County Health Department tested our employees (voluntarily) for COVID-19. I am pleased to report we had no positive cases with the 117 employees that were tested. I'd like to thank Mr. Dan Stapleton, Niagara County Health Commissioner, and his team, as well as the LP team of Dr. Patricia Grupka, Kathy Moore, Paul Feathers, Rich Salverson, Donna Fallesen, Anne Vougt and our Buildings and Grounds staff. There was great coordination between NCDOH and LP to pull this testing protocol off and it proceeded without a hitch. All testing took place at our District Offices and it was set up in a very safe and efficient manner. The high level of participation by Lew-Port employees shows the Lewiston-Porter community how seriously we take the safety of our staff and students. The results also reveal that because of our diligence around reopening protocols, our schools are safe places for our students to learn. Certainly, if a case would have been discovered, we would have moved quickly to begin the contact tracing and subsequent quarantine and isolation of staff and students as needed. Depending on the building impacted, families within that building would have been notified and if the issue was more widespread the entire school community would be notified of the next steps. The extent of notification is always based on impact on a building or the District and is always respectful of confidentiality as it relates to HIPPA and FERPA laws.

Communication makes all the difference
The Niagara County Department of Health did an excellent job at organizing this event and moving people through the processes quickly. The positive voluntary turnout by our staff represents the camaraderie and collaborative atmosphere that has developed across our district. From the closure back in March, through the summer planning and the Reopening of Schools in September, as a District, we have established open, honest, two-way communication with all stakeholders. I can't begin to tell you all how proud I am to lead this school district. As I walk the campus I receive so many good wishes and words of encouragement from staff, students, and families. It offers me great support as we continue to make the best decisions so we can move forward.

Future testing opportunities
In my conversations with Mr. Stapleton and NCDOH officials, the hope is that these testing opportunities will become more frequent and eventually be opened up to students and families. If a more established and frequent process develops within the District for testing it would always be on a voluntary basis and with full disclosure and understanding for the process established within our school community before moving forward.

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Superintendent's Student Advisory Council
I had my first meeting of the 2020-21 school year with the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council this week. This is a group of about 70 students, grades 7-12, that I meet three times per year. I organized the Council in 2015 so I could stay connected with students and hear about their thoughts and opinions on the direction of the District. This was our first meeting since the closure back in March. We had much to discuss. The session lasted about 90 minutes via Zoom. We used breakout rooms and shared screens to dig deeply into students' feelings and thoughts on the state of school life in the midst of a global pandemic. I learned quite a bit from these students and I will be sharing this discussion with my administrative team and staff.

Discussion items included:

- use of technology for learning
- course and class workloads particularly on asynchronous days for hybrid students
- learning with APEX in the fully remote environment
- when will schools start to open up further

I also learned first hand how difficult it is to teach via Zoom and keep a large group of students moving forward in the virtual setting. Kudos to the teachers and students that do this on a daily basis. We meet again in January.

Final thought
That's all for now. Spirit week celebrations have been going in our buildings across the district. It looks like staff and students are having great fun with that. Still no word on winter sports. In the Governor's news conference last weekend it was suggested they are looking at the issue.

Thank you all! Have a great weekend.

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