

February 2021
Superintendent's Report

Staff Vaccinations are tentatively scheduled for Feb. 17th. School employees were asked to fill out a survey stating their intention of getting the vaccine, and over 80% responded affirmatively. Henry County Public Health will be administering the vaccine. A second round will be given 28 days later.

The principals, Zac, Carmen and I met this past week to discuss technology and infrastructure needs that could be addressed through the allocation of the Covid Relief funds (ESSR) and the Governor's GEER I and II funds. Principals are in the process of surveying teachers on technology needs in various classrooms. Infrastructure needs identified are adding a/c in the kitchen and cafeteria areas, new high efficiency windows for the library, heating unit for the S ramp, renovation of the old shop area.

Weather has been a major issue the past couple weeks. We have 4 missed days of school to make up. In our labor management meetings, the team has recommended that as of now, we should just add the days on to the end of the year. As of Feb. 5th, our last day of school would be Thursday, June 3rd. Decision-making seems to be more challenging this year due to the timing of the inclement weather (during the school day). Relying on NWS and connections with the Louisa and Henry county roads department. I do speak with other school supts as well, and drive roads myself in the mornings.

The Return to Learn team met this afternoon. We discussed the growing sentiment among staff to reconsider utilizing virtual learning on possible upcoming snow days. We have come to the conclusion as a staff, that since further cancellations are likely to push the end of the school year into the second week of June, this is a better option. Teachers will be asked to have relevant learning activities and assignments always ready to go in case it becomes highly likely we'll need to cancel school. These activities will be given to students to complete **IF** school gets cancelled later that evening or the following morning. At this time teachers will have the option to provide work online or in packet form. A letter is being sent out to parents with more details on what to expect for their students. A draft of this letter is included in the board packet.

We had a good response from both the staff and parent surveys for next year's calendar. The labor management team will be meeting to review the data, and offer a recommendation to the board at next month's meeting.

Legislative update: The Senate has proposed a 2.2 % increase in SSA for next year. This is lower than both the House (2.5%) and Governor's (2.5%) proposals. A basic idea to remember is the higher the SSA rate, the less impact on property tax rate via the additional levy for budget guarantee.

Vouchers, or education scholarships are one of the most impactful issues for public schools being considered in the legislature. (SF159) This provides access to an education savings

account fund of \$5,025 to use as tuition at any private school they enroll in, if their current resident school is on the ESSA list of schools in need of comprehensive support. Incoming Kindergarten students would also have access to these funds. Some legislators have told their local school boards, this doesn't impact you, so don't worry about it. The problem is, it's a slippery slope that could lead to more widespread application for the use of public money for private schools. The private school doesn't have to accept all students, doesn't test students and report test scores, doesn't have expenditure transparency or open meetings. There is no publicly elected school board.

Encourage the board to follow the updates from IASB and other sources, and don't be afraid to send a quick email to our local legislators who both happen to be on Education Committees.

Senator Tim Goodwin tim.goodwin@legis.iowa.gov Senate Education Committee
Representative David Kerr david.kerr@legis.iowa.gov House Education Committee

Girls and Boys BB first round of districts will be held here. Girls play Thursday and boys on Friday. Wrestling Districts will be held this Saturday at Mt. Pleasant.