



# CHEQUAMEGON SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"The Home of the Screaming Eagles"*

## DISTRICT OFFICE

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May 14th, 2020

Senator Janet Bewley  
25th Senate District  
Room 126 South, State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Bewley,

I am writing this letter to briefly tell the story of what has happened within the Chequamegon School District since the closing of the school buildings in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As people inquire or surmise about what we have done for our schools and communities, I would like you, as a trusted representative of the people, to have the facts.

Two weeks before the Order to close schools, my Administrative Team and I updated and revised our Pandemic Response Plan and began preparations for enhanced safety measures and the possible school closure. We concentrated on three areas: Academics, Nutrition, and Employment. I am proud to say that the first day that schools were closed, we were teaching all of our students, feeding all children in the community that requested food, and were continuing to employ every staff member in the district.

In terms of academics, the first day of the closure we had packets ready to go home with all PK-5 students, as well as iPads for those who could use them. In grades 6-12, all students were learning from home, virtually, with their school-issued chromebooks in the Google Classrooms format. For those students who do not have, or have poor access to the internet, we are making home visits and exchanging materials and have expanded our wi-fi range so our parking lots can be used for connectivity. As the school-year closes, we are concentrating on Math and English Language Arts so we can decrease the learning gaps that stem from learning in this environment, as well as keeping students as close to on-pace as possible.

On day one of the closure we were delivering breakfast and lunch packets to the homes of every family that requested one. Our food service staff and bus drivers, in April alone, prepared 8 tons of meals and drove more than 5,000 miles, respectively, within the largest K-12 district in the state. It is truly an incredible effort as each day meal requests increase and family units change, which means the meal packets need to be grouped differently and the delivery routes are recreated daily.

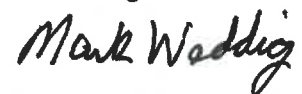
Regarding employment, all school district employees are still working, if they choose to do so. In addition to the drivers, food service staff and faculty already mentioned, we have custodians and paraprofessionals deep cleaning the schools. Paras also assist teachers, while secretaries and administrators perform their normal tasks. I created an Emergency Employment Bridge, which allows staff to work from home doing on-line professional development or school and community projects at 85% of their pay rate. Those who qualify for the Bridge meet less restrictive qualifications such as simply having children at home or being over age 60 or having a family member with an underlying health issue. I also opened our Early Learning Center for children of staff members and families of essential employees in the district such as police and fire, medical, and senior center employees, and increased the age limit to Grade 5. This service is offered at a vastly reduced cost.

The complete story of what has happened since closing the buildings due to COVID-19 is much more extensive and actually, incredible. What is written above, however, should provide you with the ability to tell our story so the facts will be known.

We now face vast challenges in the fall as we prepare for starting school virtually or moving to a virtual format in the event that another school closure is necessary later in the year. We also must close the gaps that were increased due to students' inequalities in accessing learning while at home. We will need to do BETTER than we did this spring if this is our new reality, because our students deserve the best, and we cannot afford to have a generation end up a step behind the rest of the world academically because we failed to think and act progressively. I promise the Chequamegon School District will do great things as we take the lead during this historic time in our lives.

Thank you for your all you do for our state and our children. Feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Weddig". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark Weddig  
District Administrator