

School District of West Salem

TROY M. GUNDERSON, Superintendent
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May 12, 2020

Dear Senator Shilling and Representative Doyle,

I hope this letter finds you, your family, and your colleagues well. I would like to provide you with an update from the School District of West Salem regarding the work of our school board, staff, and community to address the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to recognize our school district and community for their remarkable work under unusual circumstances.

Less than two weeks after the announced school closures, our entire organization adapted to a completely different approach. The team displayed remarkable levels of ingenuity, creativity, and innovation. The world of public education was revolutionized within a matter of days. Well done one and all! Our teaching staff quickly adapted to the uncharted waters of leading students through the journey of remote learning. They are living our mission district mission by “serving with passion” in creative and innovative ways. From Zoom meetings and recorded lessons to phone calls and personal text messages, our staff is literally going the extra mile to reach every child.

Speaking of the extra mile, our transportation staff delivers food, school materials, technology, and the good old fashioned support of a smiling face. The school district technology staff provides training and support to assist the teaching staff in serving our students. The district provides Apple I-Pads to all students in grades 3 through 8 and Apple MacBook laptop computers to students in grades 9 through 12. The staff quickly identified those students lacking appropriate internet connection and responded with support and/or the installation of hot spots.

Our maintenance and custodial team are disinfecting our facilities to protect those who are unable to work from home. The team also tackled a number of issues on the “to do” list that they often cannot get done with students and staff in the facilities. The closing of school allowed our team to accelerate a roof replacement project to accommodate the contractor. The process will be completed faster and at less cost to the taxpayer. In addition, a local roofing contractor was better able to keep their workforce employed.

With respect to serving the community, our teaching staff collaborated with the local Lions Club to raise money for local food pantries. Our employees raised \$19,000 to help families in need.

Looking forward I cannot help but to wonder how the COVID-19 pandemic will change public education forever. Our organization proved to be more nimble and responsive than previously thought. The team retooled, retrained, and redefined our business seemingly overnight. We stand ready for what lies ahead!

As we prepare for the unknown of school again in the fall, I encourage you and your staff to lead our state by working together in service to our children. I welcome your calls or emails so that I can explain our work and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Troy M. Gunderson, Superintendent