

Genoa City Jt. 2 School District

Kellie Bohn - Superintendent

Dear Representative August and Senator Nass,

As we are working through the final days of our school year, I wanted to share some highlights and concerns from the Genoa City Jt. 2 School District during this pandemic:

Highlights:

Community Support: While we had certainly recognized the benefit of having a small and connected school community prior to the pandemic, we were made even more aware of it. From the beginning, we have worked hard as a district to be attentive to the details in our approach to communicating with and serving our families, which has resulted in an outpouring of community support. Our families have reached out with support and appreciation for the work of our teachers, our efforts with food support, and our communication. We have also sponsored two virtual programs for parents about mental health questions/concerns related to COVID-19.

Technology Devices: We are fortunate to have 1:1 devices for our students in grades K-8, so we were able to send home devices with all of our students for remote learning. This has made a significant difference in being able to provide quality instruction and learning experiences for our students, as well as to communicate with our students and their families.

Food Support: We have been providing grab and go breakfast and lunch bags to our students since the beginning of our closure, servicing over one hundred students each day. For the last two weeks, we have also been providing frozen meals available for heating at home on Fridays to cover some of the weekend meals. Our grab and go program has been extended until August 31. We are so thankful that the rules surrounding school breakfast/lunch programs have been adjusted to allow us to feed our students during this closure. In addition to our grab and go bags, we have been providing monthly supplemental food boxes to families in our community who request them. March and April's boxes were funded through local donations and we partnered with our local food pantry to provide boxes for May and June. We anticipate that our families' needs for food support will continue and potentially increase, and we are grateful for our larger community for making it possible for us to provide support to our families who need it.

Concerns:

Connectivity: While most of our families have some level of internet connection in their homes that are adequate for supporting regular nightly homework, the increased demands of streaming and video conferencing created connectivity issues for families that we did not anticipate. Further compounding this issue is the challenge of having multiple devices needing to connect at the same time. We did provide, and in some cases delivered, paper/pencil packets for students who could not connect digitally and have also added an exterior access point on our middle school so that students/families could access our network from our parking lot.

Increasing Achievement Gap: Our student attendance throughout the closure was pretty constant and many of our students completed assignments on a regular basis. However, there is no question that we will face ongoing challenges with gaps of content and understanding as a result of this time. We are already working on pacing guide adjustments and discussing ideas for addressing these deficits both inside and outside of the regular school day.

Fiscal Uncertainty: As we work to put our plans together for fall, there are so many things that are uncertain. Having to address situations and solve problems that are unique to the pandemic presents significant challenges. Creating solutions to these complex problems obviously has a cost. As a small district, this presents a significant challenge. Hearing about potential cuts at the state level has honestly been devastating. For us, this would result in staff cuts—at a time when additional help for our students is necessary.

Although our school buildings have been closed since March 16, the role of our schools as the center of our community has never been more evident. We know that our continued presence, even virtually, has been of comfort to our families and supported the continued education of our students.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the contents of this letter. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do to provide you with additional information or insights to help to inform your decision-making. I know that you recognize the significance of your work during this time in making a critical difference in the future success of our students, schools, and state.

Sincerely,



Kellie Bohn
Superintendent
Genoa City Jt. 2 School District