



4850 South 60th Street ■ Greenfield, Wisconsin 53220 ■ Phone: 414-855-2050 ■ Fax: 414-855-2051

June 24, 2020

Dear Education Committee,

We certainly share a common interest in having students return to our school buildings this fall. We recognize that in order for the State's economy to re-open, school-aged children need to return to school so parents can confidently return to the workforce. Our number one goal is to provide safe, welcoming, and supportive school environment for our students to return to in these unprecedented times.

The Greenfield Learning Community is richly diverse and incredibly supportive of their schools and I am proud to be the superintendent in this amazing community where I started my teaching career 29 years ago. The first sentence in the School District of Greenfield's mission statement reads, "We believe all learning begins with meaningful relationships." This sentence is what anchored the work of 486 highly committed teachers, administrators, support staff, food service workers, and custodians as they focused on meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of each of the 3,549 students and their families, during the mandated school closure and the resulting emergency distance learning.

In Greenfield, we are working in collaboration with our local public health department and other key stakeholders, to plan for the fall of 2020. As we engage in this design work, we are operating with a level of uncertainty that makes a complicated process even more complex. We have defined the core beliefs we will hold true to as a learning organization regardless of the setting we find ourselves in throughout the 2020-21 school year. We will continue a laser-like focus on building meaningful relationships between and among the members of our learning community. Additionally, we will prioritize essential learning goals and authentic ways to assess and gather evidence of those student learning goals, the personalization of learning for students, providing social and emotional supports, ensure students are being asked to apply knowledge and think innovatively in real-world settings, and assess student and family needs to provide them with necessary resources. While we are exceptionally clear on our core beliefs, there are several unknown or unclear variables which directly impact our ability to effectively and efficiently plan for the future:

Budget: It is not certain as to whether or not the Legislature will uphold their financial commitment to K-12 public education in the second year of the biennium. Currently, there is talk that a budget repair bill will be taken up in the legislature in the near future and there is the potential that such a bill would decrease funding to all school districts across the state. Unpredictable budgets will significantly impede our planning processes in the District. In order to be able to adequately respond to the current reality and the growing needs of our students as the result of the pandemic it is essential that I can rely on the funding that was promised to schools in the second year of the biennial budget.

Spread of the Virus: As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an evolving situation. The return to school planning will require flexibility and responsiveness as we come to understand how the virus has spread, the number of cases in my local area, and if viable treatments have been discovered throughout the summer months. In conversations with my local health department, it has become evident that we will need to enter the school year with a plan and as a district we will need to be nimble and pivot when the metrics necessitate a change in the current instructional delivery model. This means that we will be planning for multiple scenarios,

not knowing when we will need to implement the appropriate solution but rather responding to the realities the virus necessitates.

Guidance: The School District of Greenfield is currently working with our local health department to unpack the guidance document provided by the Department of Public Instruction. We are using the document to determine how best to contextualize and operationalize the considerations that are most germane to our learning community in a reasonable, practicable, and cost effective manner.

Workforce: The impact the virus will have on our workforce for the 2020-21 school year is yet to be seen. It is likely that additional educators and staff will be needed to meet student needs as well as fill in when teachers are out due to illness, needing to care for family members, or because of quarantine. The Legislature could support us in this regard by considering legislation to provide teacher licensing flexibility and removing the barriers to rehiring annuitants.

COVID-19 has laid many challenges at our feet, and by working collaboratively we have a unique opportunity to support all of the children and families in the State of Wisconsin through these uncertain times. As educational and elected leaders we set the emotional tone for the educational climate our students will return to this fall. Collectively, we shoulder the responsibility to ensure safe, responsive, and supportive learning environments which will provide every child with what they need to thrive socially, emotionally and academically. I look forward to working collaboratively with you to set the positive, supportive, and trusting tone necessary to making this a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Elliott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "E".

Lisa Elliott
Superintendent
School District of Greenfield