



June 2, 2020

Dear Mr. Forester,

Below is the message sent to Senators Olsen and Erpenbach and Representatives Considine and Plumer.

The Portage Community School District is providing learning opportunities and meals to the children in our community during the school closure due to COVID-19. We still struggle with internet connectivity issues, lack of devices, and limited supports for both families and staff. However, our district worked through these challenges as we transitioned, in a week, to alternative learning for the rest of the school year. We were able to do this because of our dedicated staff. While school looks different, we are providing learning opportunities to students in 4K through 12th grade, and learning has not stopped. I believe my administrators and staff are working harder than ever before. We developed an action plan and implemented paper and remote learning to all of our 2,300 students during spring break, which was the first week of the school closure. Our administrators and teachers provide virtual office hours for students and families to connect with them each day and they are attending weekly team, staff, and professional learning community meetings through the end of the school year, which is June 4. The teachers have developed learning activities for their students and are reaching out to each student/family each week. They continue to work on their guaranteed and viable curriculum standards and participate in staff development. Our custodians continue to deep clean and sanitize our buildings. Our support staff assist with reaching out to our students, help develop learning manipulatives, participate in professional development, and are part of our extensive meal program.

One of our first priorities was making sure our students had breakfast and lunch each school day and school supplies to learn from home. This was a huge undertaking. We use our contracted bus company to help deliver meals and school supplies and we have in-town meal sites for the students who do not ride a bus. We have custodians and kitchen staff prepare and pack the meals. Administrators and support staff deliver and serve the meals. We will end the school year with a total of 80,000 meals served in 11 weeks. This does not include our weekend meal program for the families that request meals for their children on the weekend.

Our learning opportunities span from 4K to 12th grades. While equity and connectivity present learning obstacles for families, especially those directly affected by the pandemic, we are providing weekly contact, learning activities, and social and emotional support. Our high school students who have Chromebooks and Google Classrooms continue to earn credit for classes through a pass/no pass system.

Throughout this at-home learning, we have a number of students and families struggling with providing support for learning in a home environment. We are concerned about the significant needs we will see when we are able to return to school together. In preparation, we have a team now working on the 2020-21 school year. We are trying to gauge what we will need for our students and their families. We are surveying our families and staff to plan for the future and we are waiting for guidance on how to keep everyone as safe as possible while providing in-school learning.

We are working hard for our students and their families. We welcome questions and support during these challenging times. We hope you and your families stay safe and well during this unprecedented health crisis. Together, we can be strong.

Sincerely,

Dr. Margaret Rudolph

Dr. Margaret Rudolph
District Administrator
Portage Community School District