

Superintendent Chat Question & Answers

May 14, 2020

8:00 a.m. / 6:30 p.m. Sessions

Distance Learning Survey

Last week, the District sent out a survey requesting feedback on its current Distance Learning model. The following list comprises the most common themes and successes included in the 410 responses received from families:

Successes:

- Structures within the format
 - Flexibility to complete the work
 - Being able to be around the entire family
 - Not having to get up so early
- Curriculum resources
 - Music lessons
 - Art activities
 - PE videos
 - Math and science lessons
- Use of technology
 - Whole class Zoom meets
 - Use of on-line google platform
 - Improving technology skills, especially key boarding skills

Superintendent Pelzel thanked families for the efforts thus far to continue their child's education and shared that the District formally recognized parents this week via a Resolution "Honoring Parents and Caring Adults as Education Partners."

Superintendent Pelzel asked parents to share their successes, feedback or questions on the current Distance Learning Program.

Comments:

- "My son is in the dual Language Program and he is enjoying the funny videos the teachers are sharing. Another teacher made a virtual screen and pretended to be a princess!"
- "My teacher is taking the time for one-on-one sessions and I find it's been beneficial for my child. I'm noticing an improvement in my child's skills as a result."
- "We appreciate the transparency the District has offered. We appreciate the consistency with the messaging and the open platform the District has offered to parents. Tech support is wonderful."
- "We are enjoying the whole-class Zoom calls."
- "This process has been challenging as a parent, but I've seen developmental leaps with my child."
- "My daughter has a hard time focusing as a Kindergarten student."

Questions:

- **How many times are teachers supposed to meet their students online?**
There are no requirements on the number of times a teacher meets with students during the week. The District fully appreciates how live meets play a big role in the social/emotional component of a child's learning process.
- **Are children required to have a smartphone rather than a computer or device to complete the homework?**
No. Children are not required to have a smartphone.

- **Are device cameras on or off during a live session or is it a teacher discretion?**
In order for student device cameras to be on, parent must signed a consent form. Camera use is at the discretion of the teacher when hosting live meets.
- **I have children in 3 different grade levels. What is the expected timeframe on the daily workload?**
A student should have a minimum of 2-3 hours of daily class work to include ELA, Math with Science, Social Studies and PE also included sometime during the week.
- **Is there a plan to have more programs for students in the Dual Immersion program? My child is losing what he's learned.**
The District will work through structures and new models to further support students in this program.
- **Is NSD considering a flexible end-of-year like the Hart District?**
The District's current plan is to finish the academic year the first Friday in June to give sites time to wrap-up the year and collect student devices and instruments.
- **What will happen if a family is done with Distance Learning and chooses to have child(ren) no longer participate?**
The District does not recommend this option, however this is a parent choice.
- **Will Trimester 3 grading be flexible considering the current situation? How will you grade?**
The District and the teacher bargaining unit (NTA) are in the process of creating a Resolution that will address Trimester 3 student grading. Communication around grading will go out by end of May/early June.
- **Can families keep devices or instruments at home over the summer?**
No. All instruments and devices will have to be turned in to sites in early June.
- **If the Distance Learning model is still in place in the fall, will it possible for teachers to remain with the same group of students in an effort to address the social/emotional component of learning?**
The District is confident that teachers will articulate amongst each other the needs of its students as they move forward to a new grade with a new teacher.
- **What will happen with state testing? How will Junior High Schools determine placement for students?**
State testing has been cancelled for the 2019/2020 year. 6th grade teachers will provide recommendations for Junior High Schools based on 5th and 6th grade Math scores. Hart School District will reassess students in the fall to ensure they are in the proper placement.

Superintendent Pelzel shared that the District's annual School Effectiveness Survey will go out next week. Three additional questions will be included in the survey to address Distance Learning.

What are plans for next year?

2020/2021 School Start Planning Task Force

In an effort to begin planning for the upcoming school year, Superintendent Pelzel released a 2020/2021 School Start Planning Task Force survey. The survey resulted in interest from all 10 sites and 20 individuals were selected to represent parents, teachers, classified staff and administrators. The group will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 – 5:30 P.M. beginning this Thursday, June 14th. The goal of the Task Force is to help guide and provide guidance as we develop a plan to launch school in the fall.

Parents asked the Task Force address the following questions:

- Will Distance Learning be a permanent model? How will the District work through that?

- Will class sizes change? How many children will you allow per classroom while following the parameters put in place by the Department of Public Health?
- How will compensatory hours be addressed for students with special needs?
- Will there be more than one learning model available for families who may or may not feel comfortable returning to a normal school setting?
- If block schedules are considered, how will the District determine scheduling for families with multiple children?
- How will the District address childcare issues?
- Will scheduling be the same for all 10 schools?
- Will masks be provided to students?
- If sites offer different learning models, will there be a potential for students to transfer to a site that best meets their needs?
- Will the District host a Back to School Night so students can meet their new teachers?

In the next few days, the District will be sending out preliminary dates for the 2020/2021 school year. There will be no information included on what learning model the District will follow.

The Board will receive regular Task Force updates and formal recommendations will be presented for consideration at the June 9, 2020 Board meeting.

Information on the Task Force and its participants will go out early next week. Mr. Pelzel encourages families to reach out to Task Force representatives, their Administrators or Board Members with any feedback or concerns.

6th Grade Promotions

The County Director of Public Health Dr. Ferrer and the County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Debra Duardo have prohibited all in-person graduation gatherings, including use of cars for drive-in graduations. Virtual ceremonies are the only option at this time. 6th grade teachers and principals met across district to share ideas with their PTA/PTOs around what virtual ceremonies will look like. Families are asked to stay tuned for communication from their principals.

Superintendent Pelzel asked parents to share comments, feedback or concerns.

Questions:

- **Will the District consider future in-person celebrations so that students have emotional closure?**
Yes. If the County makes that option available, the District will fully support sites and PTA/PTOs. Some sites have already begun planning live graduations in August or September.
- **Why is the District permitting drive-by meal pick-up and drop-off of devices, but will not consider drive-by promotions?**
The concern is that the promotion drive-by option could lead to potential temptation of gatherings which is strictly prohibited.

Student Registrations

NSD continues to accept student registrations for this year and next year. Sites have included their office hours in their phone messages and will include on the websites as well. Parents, please spread the word!

Stay tuned for information on June's Superintendent Chat!