

April 19, 2020 School Closure Update

Hope this note finds everyone doing well! I want to give a quick update to a few points in my Thursday update last week:

Room Cleanout - To help prepare classrooms for summer cleaning, we have developed a plan for End of Year Classroom Cleanout. It includes an opportunity for parents to retrieve any items left in the classrooms. We will be following good hygiene, social distancing, and allowing collected items an opportunity to "rest" before being made available to families. Watch school newsletters for details on how to pick up materials in the coming weeks.

Last day - We are still working on an end of the year date. I believe we will be able to have most students finish up earlier than normal, but have to confirm plans with our two employee associations. Please be patient as we work out the details.

Finances - As a district, we have committed to keeping our staff employed by working remotely. Since many of our employees live in Litchfield, this is important to our local economy in this time of financial stress for so many families. Remember that about 85% of our annual budget is personnel costs! While we are committed to providing all of the contracted terms to our dedicated employees, we are also looking for cost savings in utilities, supplies, transportation, etc. Our goal is to provide a large enough fund balance this June to completely off-set projected tax rate increases next fall. With so many families out of work and struggling with bills, we must do our part as the largest consumer of tax dollars in Litchfield to help soften the economic impact of COVID-19. When Litchfield taxpayers approved our school budget on March 10th, they really had no idea what was lurking around the corner. The taxpayers have supported us by approving contracts and school budgets - now we need to position the district to support taxpayers by cautiously, strategically, and wisely spending their dollars during remote learning.

Direct Instruction - Based on last week's survey, about 22% of students and 30% of parents think we are not delivering enough direct instruction. While 30% of our staff reported delivering 10+ hours of direct instruction in a week, 24% reported delivering 1-3 hours. We have asked our staff to consider finding ways to ensure students have multiple opportunities for direct contact each week, including ample time for direct instruction. We all know that education is largely about building relationships with our students. We will always remember the "COVID-19 shutdown semester", and students will remember the way our staff helped to support them!

We'll have additional survey questions next week. Remember, we are working 3 days of April break (4/28 - 30) and taking two long weekends (to include 4/27 and 5/1 as vacation days).

Stay Strong & Be well!
Mike