



DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020

Every Child....Every Class....Every Day

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR / JORDAN SINZ

Note – The message below is a copy of a press release that was posted on Tuesday, March 31, on the district website and our Facebook page. It was also sent to the Star-News for inclusion in their April 2nd print edition. The Wisconsin Heights School District is grateful for the partnership we have with our community. We want to continue to facilitate trusting relationships as we mutually navigate these uncharted waters. We hope you and your family are well now and always.

Sincerely,
Mr. Jordan Sinz
District Administrator

School District Continues to Monitor Pandemic While Looking Ahead at Needed Facility Updates

Despite schools not operating in the traditional fashion as a result of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus, District officials are continuing to work on developing a plan to address the District's facility needs. For the past two years, the District has been assessing and evaluating facility options to address the needs of the elementary schools. Both of the schools need a significant investment to update aging building systems (heating, electrical, plumbing, etc.), address building maintenance issues, and improve the instructional and support areas.

“While we are undoubtedly in a time of uncertainty, we do know that our schools always have, and will continue to, play a critical role in our community. Therefore, we are continuing the planning process, while keeping the pandemic and the impact it will have on our families and community in the forefront of our decision making,” shares district administrator Jordan Sinz.

The District is engaging with citizens through a community-wide survey that will arrive in mailboxes of all residents in the coming week. The survey asks residents for feedback on updating the existing two elementary schools or if they would prefer moving to a one-campus District and building an elementary wing onto the existing middle/high school. In addition, residents are asked to weigh in on if now is the time to complete some needed updates in the existing middle/high school.

“We know that an investment is needed in our schools,” adds Sinz, “and how we proceed will impact our community for decades. Therefore, it is important to us to provide an opportunity for everyone to have a voice in the process. The survey allows that to happen.”

To assist with data gathering efforts, the School Board is working with School Perceptions LLC, an independent Wisconsin firm with expertise in conducting school district surveys. The District utilized the firm's services in 2018 before asking residents to support an operating referendum.

Residents can complete the paper survey and mail it back to School Perceptions in the envelope provided or log on to the website listed on the paper survey, enter the provided access code, and take the survey online.

“We are so appreciative of the support our community has shown our schools in the past,” Sinz. “We will get through these challenging times together and with a plan that will position us well for the future.”

Black Earth Elementary News

SCOTT MOORE, Black Earth Principal

April is upon us! March did not end in a way that we are used to, that's for sure. We started offsite learning this week and it has been a tremendous adjustment for teachers, students, and parents. The expression "building the plane as you fly" has become increasingly familiar to us. There are mixed feelings of risk and uncertainty that go along with delivering offsite instruction to our youngest learners. Not only are we building it, the reality is that, unlike a plane, there is no blueprint or manual for creating the final product! We are still figuring it out and may never perfect it but please be assured we are going to be realistic, flexible, and innovative! One of the most vital elements of offsite learning, for our students, is maintaining a relationship. Please reach out to your teachers if you have questions or need anything, we are here to help! Together, we will make the best out of this unusual situation.

Looking Ahead to 2020-2021

Each year in the spring, we begin the process of placing children into homerooms for the following school year. The goal of the process is developing balanced classes of children. Homerooms are created by keeping in mind each child's abilities and learning style, their emotional, social needs, physical needs, the dynamics among children, and the number and gender in each homeroom. The process is a collaborative effort with staff to choose a good placement for all our students. While it is not always possible to accommodate all parents' input, if there is anything you would like us to consider in the placement process, please talk to your child's teacher or email Scott Moore at smoore@wisheights.k12.wi.us. The final decision on class placement *does reside with the school.*

Mazomanie Elementary News

DALE GREEN, Mazomanie Principal

We appreciate your flexibility, patience, and collaborative support as we navigate these uncharted waters during this time of offsite learning.

Our teachers have been preparing for the extended closure and we are learning more every day. Our students' remote learning experiences consist of digital platforms such as: Dojo, Google Classroom, IXL, etc. We will also have hard copy learning packets/handouts for certain subject areas. Expectations and learning activities will be communicated by your student's teacher each week and in many cases daily.

Please reach out to your student's teacher if you have any questions. Office hours for our teachers will be 9:00 AM-12:00 PM and 1:00 PM-3:00 PM on regular school days. We encourage any feedback to help us meet the needs of learning, given the circumstances. We want to continue serving the best way we can and please remember that we are all learning together as we adjust to this new way of life.

These are definitely unique times for all of us. We appreciate your continued patience and support as we work with families to keep teaching and learning a focus during these times. Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We want to be here to support and help you.

Stay safe and healthy, hope to see you soon!

Middle/High School News

ELIZABETH DOSTAL, MS/HS Principal

While I usually share a relevant education article in the newsletter, this month, this April when our world changed, I feel compelled to focus my thoughts on a simple message, mental health. April is statistically a month when suicides spike. This year, given our circumstances with the pandemic, having honest conversations with each other about emotions, stress, and coping have become even more important. Asking a person you care about “Are you depressed? Are you anxious?” is not rude, intrusive or callous. By asking these questions (and waiting for the answers) you are allowing the person to release their thoughts and feelings. Here are some tips on how to guide the conversation:

1. Talk with your child. There is an insidious but understandable myth that asking specific questions about your kid’s thoughts, feelings, and plans about suicide may lead him or her to self-harm. This is an extremely dangerous misconception. **Kids who are in trouble are relieved to be asked.** However, having an organizing set of principles when engaging in these difficult conversations is immeasurably important.
2. Consider any recent stress factors in the life of your child or family. While suicide does not come about from stress alone, **critically-trying emotional experiences (like we are in currently) may precipitate depression and suicidal thinking.**
3. Talk with your partner, friends, or relatives who know the child. Do not worry alone! **It can be awfully hard to know what a teenager is thinking.** We can define substances, irritability, and even depressed mood as common among adolescents. So, how can we possibly know when, what appears to be common, is, in fact, a harbinger of risk?
4. **Call your pediatrician or a mental health counselor.** It is wise if you are worried to call a professional. These are, at the end of the day, relatively common calls in the child mental health world. Start with your pediatrician, letting him or her know what has changed in your kid’s behavior. From there, you might be referred for further evaluation. Your teen’s school psychologist, school counselor or school social worker is also a good person to ask.

Do not worry alone. Enlist others in the difficult decision about what to do next. Suicide is a problem among adolescents. Take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of our teenage-kids.

(Scholzman and Beresen, 2017, <https://www.mghclaycenter.org/parenting-concerns/when-teens-talk-of-suicide-2/>)

Athletic News

ANDREW PICKETT, MS/HS Assistant Principal/Athletic Director

Our lives have been altered in many ways this last month, and certainly it has affected the lives of our student-athletes. The spring sports world has grown accustomed to delays and cancellations, but this is uncharted territory for all of us. Our hearts break for these student-athletes, particularly the seniors. We have a number of teams and individuals who were poised to have outstanding seasons. Our coaches have been providing individual workouts (compliant with social distancing guidelines) for our kids to make sure they are in shape if/when the season begins. They are sending out communications to help our kids stay connected and maintain a positive outlook. They are on our minds and we will continue to look for ways to support them and honor them.

According to Governor Evers' Safer at Home order, along with the WIAA's requirement of seven non-consecutive practices prior to competition, the earliest date for competition as of this writing would be May 4th. The best chance we have of resuming our normal lives is to make sure that we are following social distancing guidelines and staying at home whenever possible. Wisconsin Heights, the Capitol Conference, and the WIAA are determined to hold some semblance of a spring sports season, but we will not compromise the safety of our student-athletes and Vanguard families to do so. Please take care of each other and stay positive.

Food Service News

REBEKKAH PLANO, Food Service Director

Important Changes to Meal Pick-Up

Beginning on April 6th, families will be provided with 10 bagged meals (i.e. 5 lunches and 5 breakfasts) per child at a time, one time per week. Meals will be provided between 11:00 AM and 12:00 PM at Black Earth Elementary and Mazomanie Elementary **on Mondays and Wednesdays only**. Bagged meals are available for free to all children 18 years old and younger who live in the district, no matter where they are enrolled. Children do not need to be present in order to be provided with meals. Families will be provided with meals at Black Earth Elementary or Mazomanie Elementary; families do not need to pick up meals at the school(s) where their child(ren) is enrolled. Meals may include grains, proteins, fruits, vegetables, and milk, and heat and serve options will be available.

We are increasing the number of meals provided at a time to create social distance between families and food service staff. This program is for the pick-up of bagged meals, and they are not to be eaten onsite. To help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, **do not congregate at the pick-up locations**. Please call or email Rebekkah Plano, Food Service Director, at (608) 767-2595 extension 1008 or rplano@wisheights.k12.wi.us with questions or concerns.