



Maine School Superintendents Association



Message from Scott Porter, President of MSSA

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When we were all getting our 2019/2020 school calendars approved last year we had no idea that we would be closing our school districts in the middle of March due to a coronavirus pandemic. Even a few weeks ago many of us could not imagine the scope of our current crisis. When the University of Maine System closed their campuses many of us began to realize that we better pay attention and find out what this is going to potentially mean for our school districts. It wasn't long before all of us had to make decisions to shut our districts down and deliver education from a distance. The intensity of the crisis seemed to increase exponentially with every hour that passed.

My school districts were scheduled for a workshop on March 13th with Content Specialists from the Maine Department of Education and visiting school teams from around Washington County. It was a day we had planned for since last school year and as we could see conditions changing rapidly in our country and state, we checked with the DOE Specialists at 3pm on March 12th to make sure they were still coming to the workshop, which they confirmed, then at 5pm they cancelled. It was becoming clear to me that this crisis wasn't just something happening in China and Italy, but it had even invaded our little corner of the world.

As many Superintendents began cancelling school that weekend (March 13-15), we all began to wonder what we were going to do and how we were going to do it. In my District we had our workshop on Friday, March 13th and I asked our staff to do the impossible, like all of you did. Design and implement a distance learning program and provide meals for all students that ask and do it in 2 days or less. Wow, what a task, but they did it and your districts did it as well. It all happened because we all pull together in this great State of Maine to help our neighbors in time of need and we especially make things happen when it means the welfare of our children. I commend all of you for the leadership role each one of you took to do the best for your district students and employees. I know first hand how difficult it has been to make decisions that impact the lives of so many people, our students, parents, employees and our own families. So many people in our districts were wondering, "what does this closure and this pandemic mean for me"? We had to be the voice of reason and exhibit a calm spirit in the midst of a storm. We had to give people hope that everything will be ok in the end.

Leading for equity, excellence and opportunity for all Maine Students

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Our jobs are high stress on a good day, but this type of crisis can put our stress to a whole new level. I am very thankful for a cooperative, hard working, problem-solving staff with a can do attitude. I'm sure we all experienced our administrators, teachers and support staff pulling together to do their best for our students. It was beautiful to see so many people willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to reach a goal. I am very proud of them all. I am also thankful for my colleagues who were always willing to take phone calls when I wondered how other school districts were tackling common problems as we were getting geared up for a long closure. We were all working long stress filled days, but we were all willing to take calls from other Superintendents that needed help.

I also appreciate the help and support we all received from MSMA and MSSA from the onset of this crisis. Both organizations were sending out communications daily so we would know first hand what was happening statewide and in Augusta. I thank Steve Bailey and Eileen King for their unwavering support in these difficult days. In addition, I thank Commissioner Makin for her steadfast support of Superintendents as she does everything she can to help us throughout this pandemic. She is a Commissioner that truly cares about all of us.

Even though the times are tough and unlike anything we have ever experienced in our lifetimes, we will get through this rough spot in world history. It has stretched all of us to the limit, but we are all moving forward to fight this pandemic by educating and feeding our students from a distance. As leaders in our community I know we will all continue to stand up to make a difference for our students, parents, employees, our fellow citizens and our own families throughout this crisis. We have a very talented and committed medical community that will find a solution and bring relief from our current conditions. The coronavirus pandemic will eventually become a memory. Remember to take time to care for your family and yourself.

Take care and be safe.