

Unified School District #444
Little River & Windom
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RE: Message from Superintendent of Schools

It is difficult to believe that the end of the 2019-2020 school year is rapidly approaching. I trust and hope this letter finds you and your family well. Despite the recent executive order from our Governor to close schools, it has been an exciting and productive year for USD 444. It is very unfortunate for all of our students that the school year, as we know and expect, was abruptly ended due to the COVID-19 virus. I am very hopeful that some normalcy is fast approaching and school as we know it will be in full swing next fall. I want to commend you as parents for stepping up with the change in our format and the addition of the Continuous Learning Plan for our students during this difficult time. Our staff has worked hard to provide activities for learning and to continue to educate your child, but without your guidance and support it would not have been possible. Thank you for going above and beyond and working with all of our staff through this challenging time, and mostly for having some understanding and patience with staff. I want to encourage you to continue to touch base with your child's teacher throughout the remainder of the school year. Thank you again for your support for our great district.

Included below are some updates I felt were important to you as a parent in our district:

- 1) **Graduation** - I plan to make a decision regarding a graduation ceremony for our 2020 graduates in the near future. The plan all along has been to postpone until a later date. We will honor our graduates in some form and hopefully with a ceremony this summer. Expect a decision at a later time for a date and time of a ceremony. Of course our plans are based on what is allowed from the state level.
- 2) **Bond Issue Update** - For more information regarding the bond issue and facility improvements, please go to our home page (www.usd444.com) and click on the Menu button, choose Documents and the folder is labeled Facilities and Bond Information 2019. I plan to continue to place updated information in this folder throughout the process. I would encourage you to check this folder regularly for updates and information regarding the bond process. As you are aware, USD 444 voters approved facility improvements of nearly \$18.2 million dollars in the general election in November. I want to thank all of you that supported and helped to make this a reality. District facilities were in need of

major renovations and the patrons of Little River and Windom stepped up to the plate. The community and patrons of this great community made the decision to secure our schools future and make our facilities second to none for the students for generations to come. The process started with a steering committee in the later fall of 2018. Those members carefully evaluated the facilities and made recommendations to the administration and the board of education. This process will be in year two by the time ground will break this summer. Many of our staff members were involved along with many community members. Despite the recent conditions the timeline has not changed. The timeline of events is also on the website and will be shared to the public. It is our hope that ground is broken in Windom and Little River by this June. The project is set to begin this summer and conclude by the winter of 2021 with the final remodel at Little River Jr/Sr High School. New construction will begin at both buildings with remodeling to follow. Temporary plans to house students are being made at both buildings. Students will be attending the current facilities while the new construction occurs. Space will be tight, but a plan is being made to be ready for students next fall. Many challenges will come about during this process so I ask that you are understanding through the construction process. I hope you are as excited as I am about the future of our schools and the updated and new facilities that your children will be fortunate enough to attend.

- 3) **School Lunch Program** - A huge thank you goes out to Brandy Janette, Mai Thy Jesseph, Lisa Linder and Julie Loder for preparing meals for our families in the community. If you have not taken advantage of the program please contact the district office with any questions. We are serving up to 130 meals per day, which includes breakfast for the next day. At this time the program will run until the last regularly scheduled school day.
- 4) **Communication** - I want to remind you that our website (www.usd444.com) is available to provide updated and necessary information to parents, students, and all stakeholders in a quick and user-friendly format. Facebook at (<https://www.facebook.com/Little-River-Junior-Senior-High-School-271857683554/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/windomelementary/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/USD444>) and our district app (USD444 Little River - Windom), are also ways to keep up with events at the school. I encourage you to utilize every avenue we provide to maintain a positive level of communication with your district
- 5) **2020-2021 Calendar** - The 2020-2021 school calendar is available for your viewing on the district webpage by going to Menu, Documents and 2020-2021 School Year folder. Due to the bond issue and construction needs, the 2020-2021 calendar will look different from past calendars. In an effort to accomodate construction needs for the 2021 summer and the completion of the project at Little River Jr./Sr. High School, we will be starting school a few days earlier in August and ending earlier in May. It is likely that we will see a later start to the 2021-2022 school year to allow for construction to be completed. I want to assure you students will still meet the required hours by law.