**Learning Opportunity for Chieftains during the 2020-2021 School Year, Information Notice #2.**

This fall’s learning options are focused on two paths. The first is a combination of Distance Learning and In-Person Instruction. The second choice that families’ have access to is Virtual/Cyber learning. Later on, we will share a more in-depth explanation of these learning paths, but now we need your assistance to gather information.

For Dowagiac Union Schools to be fully prepared to meet our families wishes, **every student must be registered** for the coming school year. This is critical as we need accurate enrollment information for program development, staffing, and contact information as communication is important in the digital world in which we now live. If you have not yet registered your child(ren) the following link will take you to the page on the district’s website for registration. [Dowagiac Union Schools Registration.](https://www.dowagiacschools.org/o/district/page/enrollment--403)

Once students are registered, families need to **select the learning path** they want for their child(ren). To do so, please complete a short survey by clicking this link: [Choosing a Families Learning Path for 2020-21.](https://forms.gle/Fwv5cE5U5oqPau8H9) This information is also needed for our “1 to 1 technology program.” This program is essential for our learning paths as students will need access to learning devices. We apologize in advance as a few of the questions are redundant to the registration form. When the registration process was originally developed, we had no idea we would be dealing with the COVID-19 situation. We thank you for your cooperation. The sooner you register and select your child(ren) learning path, the sooner we can adjust assignments of students to a learning path and develop our **Distribution Plan** to provide all students with access to the **District provided Chromebooks**. To be clear, families are not required to provide their own devices. However, there will be a small “**insurance fee**” to protect families against the cost of damage to the Chromebooks while they are in possession and being used by students. **We need registration and learning path selections to be completed by August 24.**

**Path #1: Distance Learning/In-Person Instruction.**

The In-Person Instruction portion of this path doesn’t need much explanation as it will be “normal” except for the requirements set by the state for safety, hygiene, and cleaning. Our distance learning is focused on trying to resemble in-person instruction as much as possible. Staff will be on-site at the school building as this provides them with the greatest access to teaching materials, technology, and support systems as well as a location for the small group instruction when appropriate to enhance productivity of learning and instruction. Your child(ren) will be taught by the DUS teacher(s) they would have during in-person instruction and provided added assistance by DUS support staff. There will be live interaction between staff and students, and of course, it will not be exactly the same, but there will be windows of time for instruction and interaction between students and staff.

To support our students and staff, we will be using what is referred to as a Learning Management System (LMS). We have selected **SCHOOLOGY** as our platform. An LMS is an online system/software and functions as an interface tool to improve classroom teachings such as activities, assessment, course blueprints, skill gap analysis, tracking, and reporting. An LMS enhances the communication, and our choice, Schoology, interfaces with PowerSchool, making the access and sharing of a student’s progress even easier. The LMS will enhance our 1 to 1 learning device program.

We have selected Schoology to provide course management, mobile learning, and support for system-wide communication. Schoology will enable our students, parents, and teachers to engage with learning materials and their school community from the classroom and beyond.

With Schoology:

* Students will participate in interactive instruction, discussions, and other instructional process.
* Students can receive and submit digital homework/assignments, review grades, receive feedback, take tests, write academic blogs, and receive announcements.
* Our parents and students can access both PowerSchool and the LMS with a single login, so there is one platform for all classes a student is enrolled. With a single login, parents can connect to their child’s teachers to access assignments, view grades, and receive feedback communication from the teacher and the district.
* Parents can download a free app i0S (Apple) and Android. Parents can sign up for push notifications and have complete access from a smart phone or tablet.

**Path #2: Virtual/Cyber Learning.**

Families choosing this learning path need to understand there is a commitment for the **full fall semester**. Students can elect this option for second semester, but that decision will not be made until at least November. The commitment is needed as there is an additional financial cost to the district for the virtual/cyber learning. The students choosing this path will have access to a Chromebook just like the students in the distance learning/in-person instructional model.

Dowagiac Union Schools is working with the **EdOptions Academy** for all students who feel that path #2 best meets their needs. Students in Kindergarten through 8th grade will be assigned the four core areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies as well as two electives. Students in grades 9-12 will also focus on the four core areas as well as elective or other graduation requirements. High School students need to recognize that they will not have access to a seventh class as they would in path #1. This is important to be aware of as 9th through 12th grader students must earn enough credits to graduate.

These programs are self-paced and focus on students successfully completing the course requirements by the end of the semester. Instruction is provided by a **teacher working for the academy**. There will be a DUS staff member who will fill the role of "mentor/coach" to each student for weekly check-ins and progress monitor as the student moves through their classes.

We hope you find this information helpful in the decision making for your child(ren) learning this fall. We will be sharing more information regarding these topics and others as we move closure to the start of school. Our goal is to provide useful information every few days.

Sincerely,

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Jonathan M. Whan

Superintendent