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Memorandum

To: Eden Prairie School Board

From: Dr. Josh Swanson

Date: August 19, 2020

Regarding: EP Online Recommendation

History

EP Online was originally approved as a Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Supplemental online provider in May 2018. Since that time, approximately 20 courses have been built and my annual goals and conversation with the board has included the vision of becoming an approved Minnesota Department of Education Comprehensive provider. When COVID-19 forced us to transition to distance learning, I directed the team to use this opportunity to explore what an application and accelerated approval process may look like, so we could serve our students and families who may want an online choice during the pandemic. The team began a process to ensure a design was innovative, feasible, had access to high quality resources, would meet the state requirements, and had an instructional delivery model that could meet the needs of students and families.

Current State

Since the governor's executive order came out on July 30, 2020 that includes a requirement to provide a distance learning experience for any student/family who requests it, our interest in this option has far exceeded any expectations that our data would have indicated. As of August 19, 2020, we have over 1570 students who have made this request. With the very short timeline and without the ability to cap this option it has forced us to review some of the distanced instructional delivery at the middle school and high school levels. In consultation with teachers and principals we've made some adjustments, so that we can be in compliance with the executive order.

Future State

After expiration of the executive order, students will be enrolled in EP Online as a separate school. Creating a separate school requires board approval under Executive Limitation 2.7.10. We anticipate we may need to enroll students officially in EP Online at some point inside of the 2020-21 school year and move beyond just meeting the requirements within the executive order. As was presented on August

10, 2020, careful thought has gone into selection of resources to support our curriculum, assessment design, financial flexibility that can scale, professional development, course alignment and expectations. The model aligns with our current high standards and academic policies and leverages the strategies we know build relationships, which we are known for. The online courses will be taught by our Eden Prairie teachers, be interactive, and help our students build not only the content and academic knowledge required by the standards, but also the 21st century skills and citizenship skills to contribute positively to society.

EP Online will leverage: the strong technology backbone and background that we have, the online tools we have available, and our relationships across the State through cooperatives and virtual services to be able to provide support to students at a distance. The establishment of this school will open incredible future opportunities for students in our district and across the state with the creative possibilities that it could support.

I recommend that the board take action to approve the creation of EP Online as a separate comprehensive K-12 school following approval by the Minnesota Department of Education and the expiration of the Governor's Executive Order. At that time the school will be its own entity. Final design and implementation will be set in motion and the new school would operate under the vision as was presented on August 6, 2020 across K-12.