



**Independent School Dist. No. 857**  
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**Superintendent's Report to the School Board**  
**December 14, 2020**  
**Submitted by Gwen Carman**

**Board Meeting Agenda Notes:**

Truth in Taxation Hearing I will be presenting a Power Point for our required annual Truth in Taxation hearing. It will highlight school funding information, property valuation information and information about prior and current year budgets. It should not take more than 7-10-minutes, assuming there is minimal discussion. We are required to provide community members opportunities to comment or ask questions.

Strategic Planning I am excited to be moving closer to 'action' to start a strategic planning process. The attachment shows I have outlined four essential steps that we can do in the upcoming months, prior to a more formal process of getting staff, student, community input next fall. Please remember that while I 'lead' this process, it is very important that the Board also be very involved throughout this process.

Additional School Calendar Modifications Governor Walz' [\*Executive Order 20-94\*](#), requires districts to provide teachers an additional 30-minutes per day of preparation time if they are teaching in a hybrid or distant learning model. You may recall we had discussions with our L-A teachers earlier about the need for additional prep time and already modified our calendar to add November 16<sup>th</sup>, December 7<sup>th</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup> as staff work days. As administrators, we recommend that we continue to build in entire days for teachers to prepare rather than attempting a much more complicated task of modifying schedules on a daily basis to accomplish this. The Ed-MN Executive Committee supports the proposed calendar changes for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. Note that this does remove an additional six instructional days for students. We will continue to pay our non-licensed staff on these days as these were already part of our budget and their work agreements.

Learning Models/Winter Sports At the meeting, I plan to update the Board on the many facets of information that are impacting our Learning Model situation and decision making, as well as discussion of potential scenarios for winter sports. Depending on what we hear from the Governor, MDE and/or MDH I may or may not be ready to confirm what our Learning Models will be after January 4<sup>th</sup>. I do understand the urgency for students, parents and staff to know as soon as possible. We are in the process of surveying staff and elementary parents as part of our data gathering.

**Additional Updates**

Review of Office Staff Roles and Responsibilities On the consent agenda is the resignation of Michelle Marxhausen who has worked in the district for over 10 years in various administrative assistant roles. She will be missed! Her departure has accelerated my plans to review all of the office positions and how we might re-organize job responsibilities and needs to be more efficient. We are meeting as a large

group on Friday. I will have an update for you at the Board meeting, though I may not yet have any final recommendations.

Curriculum Review and Planning Systematic and very thoughtful curriculum planning is essential to the work we do with students. One essential component of this is a thorough review of MN Standards in each curricular area to be sure we are adequately teaching them to students and modify/adjust/intervene if students are not meeting the standards. We also need to identify essential standards in each area and grade level to be sure we prioritize the ‘absolutes’ of what students need to master. These discussions need to happen with teachers who are teaching the same grade/same subject, as well in PK-12 vertical scope and sequence discussions to help assure we do not have grade levels duplicating standards, nor are we omitting standards. It is excellent conversations when teachers of older students can provide teachers of the younger students their observations of areas students are strong in, as well as areas where students struggle more. These discussions have never been more important than now when we know that hybrid and distant learning have created much interruption to student learning. Please be sure to understand this is not anyone’s fault – it is an unfortunate outcome of what we are experiencing.

In the L-A district, we also need to review and update our curriculum review cycle. From my perspective, this parallels and supports the discussions I outlined above. This cycle is important for budgeting purposes and to assure curriculums and resources are updated regularly. This process must also incorporate the State’s cycle of review and updating of standards. You will be hearing more about this in the upcoming months.

Technology Technology devices, software, security and more have evolved to be fundamental to how we teach and manage our schools. Our district has made significant gains in improving the technology tools that we provide students, however, that is not to say all students have an update to date device. These tablets tend to have a lifespan of only 3-4 years and so we must be very intentional in our planning. The administrative team is discussing this planning with our Ed Midwest staff. I will update as we develop a more detailed replacement cycle and any other areas of need.