

## Wisconsin Association of School Boards Forum on member district's COVID-19 response

### Report to Shorewood Board of Education

Along with the many helpful webinars WASB has hosted for members to help guide us through the COVID-19 pandemic, our state association hosted a forum for small groups of members to share their experiences and lessons learned around COVID-19 closures and virtual learning. I joined the forum June 3 with members of school boards from Kickapoo, Greendale, Belleville, Clintonville and Ladysmith school districts, as well as the district administrator from Wisconsin Rapids.

I joined for the first hour of the forum before I had a minor family emergency and missed the last 30 minutes, but still learned that many school districts faced similar challenges with both the health-related implications of the pandemic and the implications for student learning.

#### A few takeaways:

- Like us, many district's first priority in the first weeks of school closures was making sure children could get breakfast and lunch at no cost. Unlike us, many districts had the additional challenges of widespread poverty and huge geographic areas to cover. One district used its school bus drivers to deliver meals to kids at home.
- Rural districts had significant challenges with student internet access - some arranged for kids without high-speed internet to receive paper packets of school work each week. This was acknowledged as a major challenge in thinking about future required school building closures or even hybrid virtual learning models.
- One district mentioned the challenge in the number and variation of virtual learning platforms (e.g. Google Classroom vs. Blackboard or other websites) - parents struggled with learning multiple systems, remembering multiple passwords, menus, etc.
- Like us, all of the attendees' districts paid hourly staff during their closure.
- As has been true for us, other attendees' districts saw a pandemic "silver lining" in the increased participation from parents and community members when they moved to streaming video meetings. We talked about potentially continuing to livestream meetings even once in-person gatherings are possible.

*Prepared by Emily Berry, Clerk, Shorewood Board of Education June 22, 2020*