

Monday message for May 11, 2020

Dear WCSD Family—

- Tomorrow evening, the **Board of Trustees** will hold its regular (virtual) meeting and there are a number of important topics on the agenda for discussion and possible action:
 - **Budget**—WCSD joins thousands of school districts across the country in facing potential budget impacts as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. CFO Mark Mathers and his team are working closely with the state to understand what the potential budget impacts to Nevada school districts will be. I would recommend that you please tune into this very important budget update if possible as we will continue to keep our employees and school communities updated on this critical topic.
 - **COVID-19**—Trustees will also hear an update about the effects of the COVID-19 emergency on our District, specifically surrounding Distance Learning, employee safety concerns, food security for students and families, the status of construction and maintenance projects, community partnerships, and recovery efforts. This is an important and ongoing conversation between our staff and Trustees.
 - **Graduation**—The Board will also hear a presentation on plans for celebrating our Class of 2020. I know how much our Board, Leadership, and high school principals all want to have our seniors, families, and staff members celebrate this special accomplishment in a safe and healthy manner. We will discuss in detail our best thoughts and preparations to this point.
 - **School naming**—Trustees will also discuss a name for the CTE Academy at the current Hug High School location as well as results of a survey regarding the possible renaming of the AACT campus. The Board members may make a final decision at this meeting.

This will be a busy meeting and it's scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. tomorrow. I hope you will watch [here](#) and submit any comments you may have at publiccomment@washoeschools.net before or during the meeting.

- I am very happy and pleased to announce that I have moved forward with the appointment of Ms. Debbie Biersdorff as our Deputy Superintendent. As you all know, I have not filled the Deputy Superintendent position while serving as interim superintendent. I also did not fill the Chief of Staff position and will not be filling this position; the position has been eliminated. Debbie is a longtime WCSD employee who has been a teacher, assistant principal at the high school level, principal at Wooster High School, area superintendent and Chief Academic Officer. I know that Debbie is very excited to begin this new role and I am confident in her abilities to support our schools, students, staff, and families. In a couple of weeks, we will post and interview then for the Chief Academic Officer position. I am very confident that we will find an excellent candidate internally for this position as well.
- One of the many challenges we are facing as the school year winds down is how we may **retrieve and return our students' belongings** from school buildings while keeping everyone safe and healthy. Area superintendents have collaborated with Student Health Services, Capital Projects, Emergency Management, the Principal Task Force, WEA, WSPA, and WESP to create a plan for clearing out lockers, classrooms, band rooms, gyms, and any areas of the buildings where students left their belongings when they departed in March. Staff members will communicate closely with families as they arrange to return those belongings. As always, the safety of our students and staff members is our top priority, and I appreciate the hard work of Joe Ernst, Lauren Ford, and our employees who have consulted with them to put this plan together. Our principals are sharing information with their staff members this week, and I know we all look forward to accomplishing this important task together.
- The Nevada Department of Education is looking for a few outstanding – and relatively new – teachers to participate in its **Talent Pool**, and they're asking for recommendations from school district personnel across the state. Ideal candidates will have strong potential for professional leadership and an inspiring presence that

impacts students, colleagues, and community. I hope you will [take a moment to recommend](#) an educator who has impressed you with his/her dedication, creativity, and hard work.

- **Artwork** is such an important part of coping and healing during crises, and this one is no exception. Amy Barthel, our fine arts coordinator, is working with her teachers and staff to encourage our students to create artwork in the safety of their homes—and share it with the neighborhood by posting it in their windows! Student artists may choose to honor first responders who are caring for our community, or may decide to express their thoughts in a different direction. Children across the world are participating in these campaigns one community at a time, and I hope ours will also. Please encourage our students to get creative with “art at home,” post their art on social media using **#artathome**, and be sure to hang their artwork in the windows to share their talent with the neighbors.
- Speaking of artwork, EDawn is encouraging our students to submit their designs for the annual **Taxi-Top Competition**, and I hope our students participate this year! This popular competition offers student artists a chance to see their work displayed on the tops of taxicabs for an entire year. The deadline for this year’s submissions is June 10, with an award ceremony tentatively scheduled for early this fall. I’ve always been impressed by our students’ talent, and I look forward to seeing what they put together for this year’s contest. For more information, please click [here](#).
- I was excited to visit (virtually) with **Ana Sanchez’s fifth-graders at Mt. Rose K-8 School of Languages** last week. Our teachers are so creative in designing lessons and activities for their students all year, but especially during the past eight weeks as our students have been engaging in Distance Learning. Ms. Sanchez’ students were sharing their Mother’s Day gifts they created. All of her students were engaged and I could tell they really loved their teacher!
- Jeff Foss, our videographer in the Communications office, put together a wonderful video that highlights the great work of our Nutrition Services employees in partnership with the Food Bank of Northern Nevada during this pandemic. His video is now posted on the County’s COVID-19 page, and has been shared on social media pages by a number of local agencies. You can watch it [here](#).
- Our CTE staff members are reaching out to families this evening via Connect Ed with information about group and individual internships in the coming school year. These internships offer so many great opportunities for students to learn from professionals and explore their interests before ever leaving high school. They receive class credit for their work, but the experience they gain is invaluable. Internships will be offered in a variety of fields, and I hope many of our students are able to take advantage of this great chance to augment their learning experience.
- Thank you for [sending good news](#) items for me to share this week:
 - I am consistently impressed by the tremendous creativity our teachers and students are displaying in their virtual classes, and this week I learned about a very active set of stuffed animals at McQueen High School—monkeys, to be precise. [This project](#) is the brainchild of veteran educator Chris Case, who teaches German at McQueen High School. He also is a Freshman Seminar teacher/mentor, and has found a great way to engage with his freshmen by incorporating the adventures of his family’s stuffed monkeys into his emails to his students. Questions are answered by students—and the monkeys—whose photos are posted for the students to see. What a great way to keep students enthused and involved in their class and with their peers!

- Liz Lepe, who teaches third grade at Lenz Elementary School, let us know how proud she is of her students: they won the "Best Class Writers Award" in the whole District for their grade level! Liz came up with creative writing assignments, and she says her students worked hard on their skills to earn this recognition. Many congratulations to this talented group of students. I look forward to reading their best sellers one day!

I hope all of you are staying healthy and well, and thank you for your hard work on behalf of our students and families.

Take care,

Kristen