

Chief of Learning Update

April 2020

Technology Department:

Voice Over IP Phone Implementation – Update

This is an update to previous months' Board Bullets. All Voice Over IP (VoIP) phones for CCHS, JCHS, West, Belair, North and Callaway Hills, Thorpe Gordon, and East buildings have been configured and installed. The order has been received for all of the phones for the remaining elementary buildings and we will begin configuring them for installation within the next week. Due to some changes at CenturyLink, we had ran into scheduling issues, but we met with them on March 6th and have been assured that there will be no issues moving forward. The Coronavirus closures has greatly impacted our implementation schedule. Our plan is still to finish installation at all elementary buildings by the end of this school year, but we must be able to coordinate with the building administrators at each of the remaining buildings. It is imperative that we get the elementary buildings done during the school year so we can close out that order and start on middle schools immediately after summer school is over. As in the past, I will keep the Board updated as we make progress toward the successful completion of this project.

MiFi Hotspots

With the sudden closure of school due to the coronavirus, the District had to take quick action in order to ensure ALL students had access to the digital resources that were being made available for them. The first step in this process was to install exterior access points at each of our buildings so that if our students had a need, they could go to any of our buildings and access the District's internet. We understood that this was not a long-term solution and would be inconvenient for many of our families. Therefore, the District decided to take advantage of an offer from a cellular vendor and get wireless MiFi hotspots for all students who were identified with having that need through contacts teachers were making with families. Those hotspots began arriving early last week and the Technology Department has been working to get them configured and in the hands of our students. Our plan is to work through the schools and have those 715 devices into the hands of our students by early this week.

Leveraging Technology for At Home Learning

With students and teachers now operating from home, this has presented an enormous challenge for the Technology Department. We have had to implement tools that we never imagined we would have a need for, find new ways our staff could conduct everyday business, and find ways to support our students and staff that is unique to any situation we have ever dealt with before. Through all of the challenges, we have found ways to overcome the many obstacles that have stood in our way. I am extremely grateful for the commitment of the Technology Department staff to find ways to ensure the District could continue to provide services for our students. Moreover, I am thankful for the grace that our staff and parents have given us as we worked through the challenges that were presented to us. It has truly been a team effort!

Secondary Department:

COVID-19 & REMOTE LEARNING

I once told someone back in my coaching days that I thought I had seen or experienced just about everything in high school basketball, and then I was involved in a varsity game that had a final score of 18-17. Fast forward 20 years and I thought I had seen or experienced just about everything in K-12

education. Then I (we) were introduced to COVID-19, better known as the Coronavirus. Needless to say, the last three weeks have been anything but normal. I don't think any of us could have predicted the extent of school closures back in the early part of March. We have learned a lot over the last three weeks and through feedback and collaboration, we have made some necessary adjustments. Although it is impossible to replicate an at-school learning experience, it is my hope the secondary remote learning plan we are implementing beginning Monday, April 13, will provide clarity and simplicity moving forward.

Graduation-Baccalaureate-Prom

Through the assistance of Brenda Hatfield, Ryan Burns and JCHS principals, we (Brenda) sent a survey to families of seniors seeking input for the events listed above. Below is an example of what we asked families for each of these three events.

Graduation is scheduled for Sunday, May 17th at noon. If we need to move the ceremony please rank your preference:

- *Cancel graduation*
- *Keep graduation as long as we can have it sometime in May*
- *Keep graduation as long as we can have it by the end of June*
- *Keep graduation even if we need to have it in July*
- *Keep graduation but put it online for students and families to participate remotely*

We will continue to monitor the survey results and plan accordingly.

Topics Being Monitored (Information/direction for some of these topics are already known.)

- Graduation requirement exemptions
- A+ exemptions
- ACT Testing
- AP Exams
- EOC exemptions

Special Services Department:

The special education team has been working tirelessly to provide continued learning opportunities for students with disabilities during the school closure.

Our staff have found creative ways to continue to provide educational opportunities for students to progress on their IEP goals. In addition, case managers are checking on each student and assisting with these instructional opportunities via phone, email, or teleconferencing at least once per week. The type of support depends upon the unique needs of the child. Staff are often providing a combination of paper/pencil materials, electronic resources via Google Classroom, videos, teleconferencing, etc.

Just as general education looks differently during this time, special education supports will look different as well. Consequently, our special education staff will be working with parents and students to develop a contingency plan for how special education opportunities are being provided during this time. Case managers are in the process of contacting families this week in order to get input from both parents and students about what supports are helpful and the best methods to utilize. It's our hope that we can develop a plan with the family that meets the unique needs of each child.

Elementary Department:

What an interesting few weeks it has been! This is my 26th year with the district, and I must say, this one will surely be the most memorable! I am so incredibly proud of the elementary division since the closure has occurred. The staff at each building has worked very hard to make sure learning continues and that communication with every student and family is taking place.

Here are some of the commitments we have made at the elementary level to our students and families:

- Teachers will maintain regular, weekly contact with students and families. We recognize that maintaining relationships and keeping students connected to school, teachers and their classmates is vital during this time. We have seen so many social media posts regarding the great work that teachers are doing! Staff parades in family neighborhoods have also been taking place to make sure our students know how much they are missed and loved.
- Each week, teachers will prepare paper packets and online resources to extend and enhance students' learning opportunities. Beginning with April 6th's packets, a consistent learning template began being utilized by all PreK-5 teachers. This template shares reading and math expectations for the week and optional learning opportunities for students to choose from. This template will also be uploaded to each teacher's website for easy access by parents. Special education teachers are working collaboratively with classroom teachers to send work for students that is geared specifically to their IEP goals.
- Teachers will continue providing instruction and feedback to students regarding the work that is being sent home. This consistent teacher check-in may be by phone, email, text, Zoom video or Google Meets. Teachers and instructional coaches will be working together to monitor lesson passage and lesson assignment in I-Ready reading and math.
- Staff will monitor student and family needs during weekly communication. This is key, as some of our families are experiencing significant food/clothing and other living needs. Our elementary social workers have played a key part in connecting families with services they are needing. Some of our JCSD staff and administrators have also been involved with daily meal and Buddy Pack (Friday) deliveries.
- I have personally committed to ensuring that ongoing, frequent communication is also taking place with elementary principals, instructional coaches, curriculum coordinators, reading trainers and the office staff. These virtual meetings will occur on a regular basis throughout the closure as we continue to plan for the end of the school year, summer school, and the start of the next school year.

Outside of the extended closure, work in the elementary office continues. Staff special permission letters have been issued, and we are now in the process of planning for the public special permission process. Enrollment and hiring for summer school is continuing. Curriculum and assessment writing continues in art, music, pe, and counseling. Revision work with the ELA curriculum is being planned. Lastly, spring leadership consults are finishing up (virtually), and all leaders have finished spring ordering for their buildings.

I am so proud of the dedication, hard work, and compassion shown by everyone during this stressful time!!

Student Services Department:

The Welcome Center enrolled new 181 students in March. Of those, only 25 were for the current school year. The Welcome Center hosted onsite Kindergarten registration at SWECC during parent/teacher conferences. Additionally, we opened up the 20-21 returning student registration application (not included in the numbers above).

Developed and deployed a pre-populated data collection system for teachers to enter findings from student contacts. This included general questions like "how are you doing", as well as information regarding technology/internet availability and food needs.

Updated system calendars with COVID-19 closure dates (e.g. Infinite Campus)
Updated system documentation for parent at-home use (e.g. i-Ready)

On March 9, we hired the new administrative assistant who will be supporting building absences. Unfortunately, we did not get very far in the training process before the COVID-19 closure. Training will resume in April.

HR Department

2020-2021 Hiring

Our administrators have been very creative in conducting virtual interviews during our closure. Because of their creative efforts, we have landed some great hires for the upcoming school year!

Grow Your Own Update

We have had to postpone many of our Grow Your Own efforts this semester. However, we are still able to offer an opportunity for our paraprofessionals through our partnership with Lincoln University. Beginning this summer they can start coursework to becoming certified teachers. If they are over 25 years of age, they could also be eligible for the workforce development grant that will provide assistance with their tuition. We have some exceptional paraprofessionals that currently work for us that are interested in this program. We look forward to supporting them on this journey to becoming certified teachers.

