

So, the first week of April begins a new chapter for us as staff. This is the first time in over a year where we have a majority of our students back in the buildings and learning together. This is something that is to be cautiously celebrated! I have had reports of possible COVID cases in the secondary and we will see how that plays out with keeping the schools open. This is something that the elementary has been dealing with, so it doesn't come as a surprise that this would occur. Hopefully, as we move forward, some sense of routine will develop and people can get settled in for the last 38 days. The only way I describe this past year is that it is like a roller coaster ride for people who are afraid of heights.

Issues for the week:

Our Meet and Confer team took 3 items from the FR meeting to the table.

1. Attendance procedures: some buildings were using the "virtual" column and some not. Word will go out to the admin etc. regarding a consistent policy between the buildings because there has to be a method that all buildings use to help with contact tracing. This was being discussed with the skyward people and the COVID task force yesterday, so clarification will be sent to the buildings.
2. Students are either DL or In Person – that is it. Yes, this first week at secondary students are still adjusting and some tweaks are being made. After that is done, other than a few exceptions, students are to be listed as in your room or DL. They aren't to be here for a few days a week and DL the other days. One of the exceptions we talked about would be a DL student might attend a class that can't be handled well in a DL setting; such as Band. This was a lengthy discussion and Superintendent Munoz was very definite regarding this issue.
3. Student Class size – They have been trying to stay within 2 of the targets for elementary classrooms. So far, they only have 1 area of concern that they are watching and maybe making some changes. They have already made some changes to classrooms in 3 – 4 buildings. If your classroom is above those numbers, please contact the administrator. One of the issues that came forward was having a door blocked in a room with 2 doors. They are checking with Mike Stock because I don't believe that is code and neither did the superintendent. We did discuss that one of the things that maybe offered to staff is if you are not able to meet the spacing within your room would be to look for a classroom that is bigger with fewer students – a switch could be made between rooms. This would be totally voluntary, but it was a suggestion. Supt. Munoz did concede that many staff probably wouldn't want to change their rooms right now, but they want to offer that as an option.
4. There was discussion about the 5% number is for a building to be dismissed due to illness. The COVID task force was discussing that yesterday as well. From our understanding, the 5% would be determined by the total number of students and staff in the building. The other metric out there if 10% of the buildings staff is gone due to illness would cause a quarantine. The hope that now that a majority of staff have reached full immunization status, we won't have to lose many adults. The quarantine rules change if all vaccinations are complete, and people are 2 weeks beyond their last vaccination. Close contact doesn't necessarily require quarantine according to the chart.
5. The last item brought forward was loosening restrictions on student movement and interaction in the classroom within the secondary. Supt. Munoz stated that at this time secondary students are still to be facing one direction in the classroom and no turn and talks etc. It isn't a normal setting, but it is what we have right now. Unlike the elementary that travel within their own

groups all day, secondary students are in contact with several students per day. Limiting face to face interaction in the classroom is a form of mitigation and needs to be followed until further notice.

I want to thank our Meet and Confer team, Phil Olson, Michelle Bacon and Guy Simmons for their work on your behalf. They are strong voices that are not afraid to bring forward any issues that arise in our membership.

Please take the time in the next week, to view the “Full Funding for Schools” information that is coming to you. We really would like to see as many signatures as possible to show our legislators that funding our students is necessary. We can’t continue to talk about mental health and equity issue among students and then not fund the programs that would help to address the issues. You may not be politically active, but this is one of the easiest steps you can take to make your voice heard at the state level.

Finally, we have voting for REA Exec Board all next week. Please take advantage of your membership and vote to be represented. The people on Exec Board work very hard to represent staff in their area. It is a big time commitment and we have had a strong functioning board over its inception. Thank you for voting in an unusual way to work around our COVID issues!

Dan Kuhlman, President
Rochester Education Association
dan.kuhlman@edmn.org
507-319-7321