

So it begins –

First of all, thank you to the members that stepped up to provide staff development this week. It is a difficult time and so many staff are focused on all that needs to be done or are unsure of what process and procedures are going to be needed. We are lucky that we have so many talented people that are willing to offer their expertise to enable us to become better educators.

Our negotiations team has had to work on 2 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) this week.

Elementary Schedule

Due to the district dismissing students 1 hour early, the schedules at elementary had to be changed. There were basically 2 options:

1. Keep the Specials schedule as is and a group of students and staff would not have a Specials time which impacted staff prep and denied students equity in the learning day.
2. Shorten Specials to make sure all of our colleagues got some type of break during the day and making sure we are meeting requirements by not eliminating Specials for a segment of our student population. To accommodate that change, all lost prep time can be blocked and used as the individual prep on the Wednesday – DL day when no students are with them. We are going to ask for 90 minutes, which will include the lost prep and the prep teachers get on Wednesday.

Secondary schedule

Trying to meet the needs of families, the schedule was pared down so that staff would teach 3 sections one day and 2 sections the next. Unfortunately, there is a select group that will have a 4 and 1 schedule. The time has been cut on the 4 period days, so as not to exceed the 315 minutes in the contract. Looking at 39.2d of the contract was the deciding factor. I have had conversations with the MS admin about working individually with staff to work out other things that may lighten the load on the 4 period days.

The team realizes that neither MOU is perfect, but we are in extraordinary times and as Denise Specht has mentioned we need to do some flexing. Both MOUs will be stated that it is for this academic year only and doesn't set precedence for future schedules.

Angel and I are meeting every two weeks with the COVID Advisory Team. This team consists of cabinet members, Dr. Briggs (Dir. Of Public Health), Dr. Crane – (Mayo Clinic), and Superintendent Munoz. In our first meeting, they discussed how they will report out COVID numbers such as 7 day averages, 14 day averages and percentage of positive tests that are given. One the biggest issues discussed is that everyone should be wearing their mask when they are in the building. The only time that they can come off is if you are working alone in your room with the door shut. Other discussions centered on sports and special areas and if any special considerations were needed in those settings. We will meet again on September 3.

Remote Teaching

I received a bunch of emails yesterday from secondary regarding 2 main issues: The first one was in regards to remote teaching and how it works. Distance Learning teachers that can work remotely, don't need to ask for permission. This was in Governor Walz's Executive Order, an email from Superintendent Munoz and the Dept. of Labor and MDE all give permission to work remotely if your job can be done remotely. You can choose to work from the building, but no one can make you if you can do it without being at school.

Lesson Plans

Some of the secondary buildings have seen a sketch of what type of lesson plans were going to be required for DL. I was very confused by the issue when my email was burning up!

So for both issues, I made a few phone calls this morning. Notice will be going out that staff doesn't need to ask for permission to work remotely. And, the lesson plan issue is being revisited. I believe, administrators will be looking for the posted lessons that will be going out weekly for your DL students. We will check out what is sent to staff, so that we can be in the loop.

Finally, I have the weekly meeting with Denise Specht – Ed MN president. It has been good to hear how things are working around the state. We are in different places from city to city, so it is hard to comparisons at times. My last big thank you goes out to the Executive Board and Faculty Reps that have been sending me issues throughout the week. I am very lucky to have a group of people that are trying to answer questions, but when they can't aren't afraid to ask. There are rumors a plenty and we have to move to reliable sources of information. I will continue to preach "be kind, be courteous and most of all be forgiving." Students will come and go, but our colleagues are there for us to lean on and draw strength from during chaotic times. This is where we get the strength to center ourselves before the students get here.

I am leaving on this link to the Education Minnesota website page that deals with all things involving Coronavirus.

<https://www.educationminnesota.org/resources.aspx#in-the-classroom>

Sincerely,

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