



School Union 69

Office of the Superintendent

Hope, Appleton & Lincolnville

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May 6, 2022

Dear School Union #69 Administrators, Teachers and Staff,

Looking back, I was surprised to see that my last update to you all was early February! Well, I couldn't let Teacher Appreciation Week pass without reaching out to you all, so I can fill you in on all that has been going on here at the Central Office.

Appreciation

To begin, let me express my sincere and heartfelt appreciation for all of you and all you do on a daily basis. Sure, I taught for 17 years, I know the joys and the struggles, but teaching has changed, and the last two years presented us with challenges we never could have imagined! So, please know that I am deeply grateful to your commitment to the students and to each other. This is a very special group of schools and I know your principals are very proud of the myriad ways you have stepped up to these challenges and continued to provide our students with excellent academic experiences! I wish you the time and space to reflect on all the good you have put into the world just by being an amazing educator!

COVID leave law

As you may know, last year the legislature passed a law requiring districts to retroactively (for the span of time between 1/1/21 and 10/18/21) grant sick leave days for COVID related reasons that do not take away from an educator's accrued leave. Recently, the legislature amended that law to require the district to provide up to 15 COVID leave days, retroactive to 10/19/21. As of 4/15/22, anyone with 60 or more accrued is no longer eligible for the COVID leave days. More on this is likely to come, but please know that we never stopped paying attention to the reasons you have been absent, and **we have not been charging COVID leave to your accrued days**. Stay tuned for more detailed information about this. If you have any questions, give us a call.

Budgets

The budget process is a months-long journey that starts in the school buildings and then, in public meetings, gets reviewed, revised and redeveloped in partnership with the school committees and the town's budget committees. I am very proud of the support we have garnered from the towns and the hard work the principals have done to ensure that we have developed budgets that meet the school's needs and plan for the bold, innovative projects in development at the schools. There is one more step, however.

If you are a voting member of one of our three towns, please pay attention!

Each town will hold an open town meeting in May, in person, at the schools. At this meeting, the power of voting on the budget numbers and the cost centers is in the hands of the voters present at the meeting. While we have the support of the budget committees in each town, we need pro-school voters at these meetings to ensure that the budgets that we worked so hard on are passed as is! Please gather your friends and families who are eligible to vote and attend a meeting!

Appleton: Monday, May 16 at 6 p.m.

Hope: Thursday, May 19 at 6 p.m.

Lincolnville: Wednesday, May 25 at 6 p.m.

COVID

As you know, the CDC and DOE have terminated the pooled testing program, effective next week. Additionally, the Standard Operating Procedure for managing positive cases in schools will also terminate at the end of the school year. However, in keeping with the rest of the state, we are seeing an increase in cases in our schools since break. Individual precautions recommended by the CDC include vaccines and boosters, masks and distancing when possible. Finally, we had offered the community a panel discussion with local doctors regarding managing COVID, but that was cancelled due to lack of interest. At the time, I said the nurses and I would look at putting together a Q&A document from the questions asked. However, in looking at the questions and the speed at which the virus landscape appears to change, we feel it would be better that people with questions refer to the CDC for their latest guidance.

August PD

As you may remember, we asked teachers and staff to complete a survey about potential Professional Development for next year. Your input is paramount to this process because it is my firm belief that professional development must be relevant and useful to be worth your time and effort. The number one PD topic, according to the survey, was Highly Effective Teaching Practices. This is a great place to start because we all know that effective use of these practices can help cultivate a classroom culture that results in more positive academic and social/emotional outcomes for our students. Therefore, all three districts will be getting together in Lincolnville on August 30th for professional development with Anita Stewart McCafferty, USM professor and author of Teaching Strategies that Create Assessment-Literate Learners. Anita has been to SU 69 before to provide PD, with great success, I am told. She remembers the district fondly and is looking forward to coming back.

The second most popular topic on the survey was Behavior Management. Because we are limited in the number of days we have available for PD, and each school has other initiatives on which they will also need to focus, we decided to begin the Behavior Management PD with our Ed Techs., but teachers are welcome to attend if they wish. On August 29th, starting at 12:15, Jessica Minehan, author of The Behavior Code, will present a three-hour webinar on behavior management. More details to come.

We are excited to offer these professional development opportunities and look forward to ongoing conversations about this good work we are doing!

Cultural Competency Institute

This year, Danielle Fagonde (HES Principal), Josh Mitchell (AVS PE Teacher), Brittany Black (LCS Special Education Teacher), and Tracee O'Brien (LCS School Committee Chair) and I participated in MSSA's Cultural Competency Institute. One Monday a month, we were provided with professional development with participants from all across the state on diversity, equity and inclusion. We have met as a team throughout the year to debrief on what we have learned and to brainstorm ways to better inform our practice from the lens of inclusion and equity. We hope to share more of what we have learned with you next year, but if you are interested in this area of research and practice, I could suggest two books for summer reading: Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain by Zaretta Scott Hammond and Public School Equity, Educational Leadership for Justice by Manya C. Whitaker. I have read the first book and will be reading the second this summer. It is likely we will offer a book group next year for those of you interested in exploring these books further. Stay tuned.

Enjoy what looks to be a beautiful weekend!

Kate