

LEARNING LOSS CONCERNS

A 2019-20 school year that was seeing steady growth saw an immediate downturn when schools turned to remote learning in March of 2020. Identifying students not adversely impacted by the pandemic would result in a number far smaller than those dramatically impacted by COVID-19. Learning Loss has been greater than we had hoped based on test scores. Unfortunately, this Title 1 district has experienced significant downturns in student achievement and it runs across all socio-economic groups and races/ethnicities. Very little distinction is discernable between sub-groups of students.

The Plummer-Worley School District (PWSD) has been in ongoing discussions with stakeholders regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic since the summer of 2020. Discussions with staff, students, parents, the Boys & Girls Club, Marimn Health, members of the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Department of Education, the district's Parent Advisory Group, the PWSD Board of Trustees, the Back-to-School Committee and the community at large have been ongoing. Many of these engagements are conducted on a monthly basis but some are even more frequent. All discussions, regardless of subject matter, eventually lead back to discussions regarding COVID and its impacts on our youth, more specifically the academic impacts COVID-19 has had. Discussions have been regularly scheduled and consistent and in a variety of venues. What was originally considered staying ahead of the curve, with regard to a "short term COVID problem", the need for constant communication has been evolving into an extended new mode of operation. These discussions have taken many forms, but further formalization is warranted for the "long haul". Formalization and consolidation with a more consistent message will require formalized meetings and agendas. Infrastructure for this effort will be concluded by December 31, 2021.

As the district entered the 2020-21 school year, technology was expected to resolve many a problem. Unfortunately, students became distant as did relationships amongst themselves and staff. Support systems were fractured. It wasn't long before the district realized it would need to double down on the instruction. The problem we had then still exists today. Access to students outside the normal school day and school year is limited. This is both a blessing and a curse. Students are engaged elsewhere in the community, but the schools don't have access.

The Blessing - The communities served by the PWSD maintain a plethora of groups already providing services to youth at the end of each school day and during the summer. Youth activities already employed restricting a school's access to students include, but are not limited to: Coeur d'Alene Tribe's 'Rockin' the Rez' camp for 9 weeks during the summer; the Tribe's Department of Education employing dozens of students during the summer to engage in meaningful learning activities; the Boys & Girls Club escalates the number of activities and availability of their services during the summer and after school each day. The PWSD already provides a 3 week Summer School for students that are falling behind at the secondary level, but it's insufficient to address this much loss in a 3 week period. The PWSD provides a 2 week Success Center program for elementary students, but it competes with other reservation activities, so very few students attend.

The Curse – We have only one week during the summer to make an impact. One week. The PWSD will be introducing a one week "Jump Start" program during the month of August for students qualifying for the program. What does one do to address learning loss when you have very little

additional time to work with students? Having Saturday school is looked at as punishment and not opportunity, so an extended school week is problematic. The only answer is to not expect large groups to attend and look at every student on an individualized basis to maximize the time available. The key is in the diagnostic component followed by individualized/small group tutoring. Even more importantly, address factors hindering the learning process and the whole child.

In conjunction with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Department of Education, the PWSD will be collaborating on developing continuous Adolescent Support Teams (AST) focusing on the whole child. Whereas addressing academics shortfalls are the target, a larger perspective is warranted. Using available data, identify both long term and short term academic shortfalls, brainstorm potential engagement strategies, and utilizing the AST to help communicate to parents/guardians potential resources available to them as a means of support i.e. student mental health resources.

Using the data and meaningful relationships, school staff and the AST can make best efforts to ascertain the best means by which they might engage each respective student and parent. The team can encourage meaningful change instead of change for change-sake. The AST can assist students in understanding the credit retrieval process and how best to use the resources available to them. Make them aware of additional school academic supports and tutoring that gets them what they need. Find potential community leaders to encourage and assist the students via practicums and internships. The AST might identify tutors, in class supports, additional exposure to academic materials, extended days, and/or providing adequate transportation & food services to make said opportunities more attainable. This close monitoring by each respective team will be purposefully addressing the types of challenges each respective student faces, amount of learning loss, and means by which the respective student might engage their learning in a more meaningful way. This approach helps to leverage all of the community's resources.

The PWSD is committed to using Learning Loss financial resources to provide additional resource hours for staff for diagnostic purposes, additional tutoring hours, after school/summer engagement opportunities and provide ancillary services (transportation/food services) to round out a complete support package. In addition, the PWSD is reinstating individual and small group mental health counseling (post initial lockdown) in the district in a more meaningful way through Marimn Health, the introduction of the "Risky Connections" program for secondary students, and the PWSD is partnering once again with the National Native Children's Trauma Center out of Missoula, Montana for additional supports.

STAFF CONCERNS

The Plummer-Worley School District (PWSD) was fortunate to have a reasonably good retention percentage of certificated staff for the 2021-22 school year. During the 2020-21 school year, the district monitored staff and their concerns throughout the year. Flexible scheduling of parent-teacher conferences, consolidation of days which gave rise to a couple of additional days of rest, and a district provided professional development day with presenter Jim Sporleder addressing the need for self-care, were just a few ways the district took staff into account as they dealt with the pandemic. As a result of some of the outside "stressors" staff experienced, the district started a new full service daycare for staff to eliminate familial concerns.

The district is committed to exploring and possibly extending unique opportunities for its staff. The district is engaging both Marimn Health and the National Native Children's Trauma Center out of Missoula, Montana for additional supports for the adults in the Plummer Worley Joint School District. This planning process will continue throughout the year and change as the need arises.

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

As we head into the new school year, the PWSD is encouraged by the physical health, mental health and social supports we are receiving from the community and its partners. As the year progresses, the administrative ranks will look to region 1 administrators for additional ideas and support. As always, not knowing what the year has in store, the district will call on the Idaho State Department of Education as warranted. The PWSD is committed to a collective review of the plan at each opportunity. It is expected that a majority of the groups identified in the first paragraph here will revisit the plan twice a year. Updated plans will be posted on the district website. The district will provide opportunities for feedback and a continuous review of data in order to identify successes and shortcomings. As always, the PWSD Board of Trustees remain focused on the challenges at hand and will require COVID-19 updates monthly.