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Superintendent's Report for: April 2020

April Discussion topics with regional superintendents, Commissioner Makin and the DOE:

- CARES funding: Each district should be receiving money to help with compensatory education projects, such as addressing the learning gap and providing technology connectivity for students. This is not to reduce budgets in general. It is to address concerns created by the lack of classroom instruction in schools. Money is coming within 60 days. Should amount to 80% of Title 1 funds. Our schools currently get about \$20,000-\$30,000 each for Title 1, so \$16,000-24,000.
- Opening of school: Will most likely be a phase in approach, but there will need to be a decline in cases, hospitalizations and CDC will make the decision. There will be guidance in tandem with the Governor and the DOE will provide clear direction. There is planning for PD for school staff over the summer to problem solve how to safely navigate the return to school. Determinations will be made, but situations will be managed individually
- Devices and Connectivity: The DOE realizes that the biggest impact has been the lack of connectivity and they are committed to addressing this issue. They are looking at using the CARES Act pool of money to states to financially support this. The DOE is considering funding technology for 3-6 months then have districts pick up the costs. Some chromebooks have become available. (Appleton is receiving some of those).
- Learning plans range from packets sent out every two weeks (with no technology) to daily zooming with classes. The plans need to be individualized for each family based on needs and available connectivity. The Commissioner is asking that we focus on food services and physical, social and emotional well being for our students. We also need to be very careful about equity for all students and not widening a learning gap. Very challenging! Surveys coming back to administrators are seeing a majority of parents who are overwhelmed with the workload for students. Best plan seems to be individualizing for families based on needs.

- End of year date: This is up to individual school committees to decide. The Commissioner is recommending that districts stick to their current end-of-year calendar date. There was discussion in some districts for ending at the end of May and using June for professional development for addressing the gaps in learning in the fall and improving online instruction delivery in the future (if needed). The problem is that the MEA is arguing that this is a change in working conditions (more days for PD than in the contract) and so this needs to be negotiated. If staff remains working with districts (PD days), schools are not 'closed' and therefore school nutrition programs may continue until they are officially 'closed'. Some districts want to survey parents for input on this decision.

- Grading: The Commissioner is strongly recommending a 'do no harm' approach to assessment during this time, meaning no consequences for work not completed. Although we strongly encourage students to complete the activities to the best of their abilities and for teachers to provide appropriate feedback, we will not be 'grading' the work for report cards.

- Town elections and budget process: The Governor has many options on her desk right now and will get back with us on the process once there is more information. Right now, July 14 is the date for the primary elections, pushing back all other current deadlines. If budgets are unable to pass, the prior year's budget goes into effect.

- How to manage special education requirements? Right now since we are not providing 'new' learning for any student, we are not required to meet the special education legal requirements in individual education plans

- Connectivity for all students? Recent 'offerings' have been contracts in disguise

- Paying employees Right now we are mandated to pay all school employees (all are considered essential) to keep the unemployment stream open for others and to try to stabilize the economy. We are also asked to continue to pay all contracted services and vendors as budgeted as long as they continue to pay their employees

- Budget process (LD 1267): The Commissioner is telling us to go ahead and budget the amount we were given for subsidy. Some were hearing that this amount would now be cut with the economic fallout.

- Public meetings (LD 2167) Meetings may now be conducted through telephone, video, or other similar means as long as the public may attend and notice is given as to how to do that. School committee members must be able to hear and speak and roll call votes taken. Public must be able to hear and participate (email members of committee?)