

## School Board observer report for Sept. 23, 2020 from Carol Maloney

### Specific Details Regarding Pullman School District's Plan for Distance Learning:

#### Addressing Quality of Instruction--

#### 1. Planning for 2020-2021 School During a Pandemic\

a. Both the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent were part of the State of Washington's task force on designing a quality instructional plan for the upcoming school year given the emerging and continuously changing circumstances driven by the pandemic.

i. Their involvement in the state's task force allowed Pullman School District to align its work with what was happening at the state level. Every district in the state was required to create and submit for approval a reopening plan with distance, hybrid and in-person learning models incorporated for maximum flexibility.

ii. The district did an excellent job of community with their stakeholders, involving anyone who was interested in the planning process for creating the district's application to the state. All of this work is documented by sub-committee meeting minutes on the district website (<https://www.pullmanschools.org/coronavirus>).

#### 2. Current Distance Learning Model:

#### a. Lessons learned from spring semester 2020--

i. Based upon the feedback from students, teachers and families, the district redesigned its distance learning model, chose specific Learning Management Systems (LMS) for each grade span based upon that feedback so that specific student and family needs could be addressed. The district responded to parent/guardian concerns about the complexity of communications coming to families from teachers and administrators and streamlined that communication. The technology department distributed both technology and support systems so that issues can be dealt with immediately.

ii. The Moscow Pullman Daily News just ran an issue with student feedback about how this first all distance learning quarter has gone:

**"Staying Distant but Engaged** Everyone's missing out when it comes to social interaction, the students and teachers alike. If I imagine myself teaching virtually, I can see how it must be easier when every student's muted, but also very weird. (Teachers) are used to the background noise of a classroom and many have uneasily said, 'please unmute and talk a bit too, because I'm the only one talking to an empty room.' ...I would like to thank the teachers for their undying endurance and patience, and the school district for working tirelessly to give us students an education, and a good one. Maybe I've had some stressful days, but I can imagine that those are nothing compared to what you all went through to get school running. Thank you so much."  
Jasper Premo, Lincoln Middle School, Pullman

iii. In order to deal with the stress that the distance learning conditions put on students and families, the district has specific plans regarding how to respond to student, family and indeed staff stress.

iii. The technology department redesigned the website to make it easier for families to find and use resources and information.

iv. The district continues to provide healthy food support for families as well.

### 3. Learning Management Systems:

a. K-2 Seesaw for Families

b. 3-12 Google Classroom

c. Secure management systems where students can upload work, communicate with each other and with their teachers, check on grades, encouragement and feedback.

d. Single document with hyperlinks for families available on district website that provides families with immediate resources, tutorials and answers to frequently asked questions. Hot buttons on district website to engage the district's technology department as needed.

### 4. Other Regional Districts with similar positivity rates to Pullman's

a. Central Valley School District in Spokane is about a half-step ahead of Pullman School District with regard to transitioning between models. They brought back their pre-school children two weeks ago and are planning on bringing back their K-1 students next week. Pullman will be using the same kind of rolling return so that each grade span can be oriented to the hybrid system before adding another group of students. Whitman County Health Department has given the go ahead for primary school return to hybrid in-person learning. Dr. Maxwell, the PSD Superintendent is recommending that the return to hybrid be a deliberative and intentional process, there is no need to rush. In the next Observer Report, I will outline in more detail what the School Board's current discussion is in that regard.