

SCHOOLS: 2020-2021 school year to include two-week spring break

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and disseminating feedback from school employees and patrons, the board voted 3-2 for the start date for the 2020-21 school year to be the first Tuesday of September, which falls on September 1, which is before Labor Day. The two-week spring break, which has been the subject of debate, will remain in place for at least one more school year.

Wilkins acknowledged that the board will look more deeply into the issues of inequity of the two-week spring break.

“We know it creates a hardship for some of our families and that needs to be addressed,” he said.

The board also plans to discuss the concept of always having school start the first Tuesday of September, rather than hinging the decision on where Labor Day falls.

Details of the calendar, including in-service days and end date will be determined in the weeks ahead.

During the business/finance report some discussion ensued about what the future may hold — in light of the coronavirus crisis — regarding some of the extra funding earmarked by the Student Success Act expected for next year. Superintendent Curt Scholl acknowledged that “there are more questions than answers” and that he knows school districts will be continually updated in the weeks ahead.

Schools are funded based on enrollment and Scholl explained that the state has basically “frozen” enrollment numbers based on the count in December.

“With the economic impact of this crisis I am having a difficult time believing that we are going to be as whole as they (the state) think we are going to be,” he added.

At the same time the district may have a drop in some expenditures due to the closure of schools.

Administrator reports began with Special Programs Director Martha Hindman.

She said, “State leaders are working to make sure that equity is kept in the forefront for special needs students.” Locally, she said, the focus has been about reaching out right now to families. “Special education teachers are going to be looking at each of their students and how they are making access to instruction,” she said. “We need to ensure whatever we are planning is accessible to all students.”

Elementary Principal Joan Warburg reported on what her staff was doing in the

first days back from spring break. The first two days were spent making phone calls and emails to connect with families and teachers reported very positive connections. “Parents were thrilled to have that connection and have that opportunity to talk to another adult who cares about their children and are walking that road with them,” she said.

Warburg acknowledged that her staff is “clearly grieving with the knowledge that they won’t be back in the classrooms with their kids.”

Beyond that she said, “Our focus moving forward is how to move into the new style of learning. I am super proud of my teachers and other staff. Their passion shows for all of our students and, in particular, for our most vulnerable students.”

Middle school Principal Alison Haney began with praise for her staff in the “awesome resilience” her staff is showing in light of this “tremendous challenge.” She said she is trying to instill in her teachers for this first week of instruction that “anything we do will be great” and that she believes “that everyone understands” what we are up against.

“It has actually been an inspiring process for me amidst a tough time,” she said.

Sisters High School Principal Joe Hosang said he feels grateful for the love he and his staff at the high school are receiving back from the community.

“Parents and students are telling us to take care of ourselves and are incredibly thoughtful and understanding,” he said.

He said that as an example of the support being shown by the community that VAST Church had offered to supply lunch for all the teaching staff throughout the district from June’s Kitchen. “That’s just incredible,” he said.

(For information on how the school closure affects students, including graduating seniors, see related story, page 1).

Superintendent Scholl also reported that the construction of the transportation center adjacent to SPRD is progressing on schedule.

The next board meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, and is available to the public via Zoom. Access to the meeting will be posted on the school district website.

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