

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**Date:** October 26, 2020

**To:** Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

**From:** Building Principals  
Grade Level Administrators  
Assistant Principals

Heather Glowacki, Ed.D.  
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Administrator for Student Services

Angela DeMay  
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Chief School Business Official

**Subject:** **Enhanced Remote Learning Program Review Update**

**Background**

Wilmette District 39's 2020-2021 Reopening plan, developed by the Fall Planning Committees, Advisory Task Force, and Administrative Council, outlines a continuum of instructional models (in-person, hybrid, full remote) that maximizes student learning and connection while adhering to all recommendations for student and staff safety provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Prior to Fall 2020 enrollment, families of elementary aged students were presented with two options: in-person and enhanced full remote for 1st semester. Families of students in grades 5-8 were presented with two options as well: hybrid (combination of in-person/remote) and enhanced full remote for 1st semester. As a result of family choice, there are 748 students participating in the enhanced remote learning program districtwide -- approximately 20% of district enrollment. The district has dedicated 46 teachers to teaching remote students: classroom teachers, special education teachers, related arts/creative arts teachers, etc.

Administration has provided ongoing support since before school started. Building administrators, in particular, have been meeting regularly with remote teachers to understand their needs, problem-solve any concerns that have arisen within this new format for teaching and learning. Problem-solving has addressed issues such as technology, social interaction, and maintaining connections between students and their home school. In the area of technology, building administrators have worked with teachers to provide tools ranging from document cameras and second screens to teachers by request, they have troubleshooted technology challenges, and have provided release time for teachers to gain additional professional development by teaching their remote class(es). In addition, there have been many efforts to ensure that elementary students are able to maintain contact with their home schools. Elementary principals have joined remote classes in a variety of ways (e.g., mystery reader, sub, working with small groups, co-facilitating with the teacher) so students continue to see their principal and feel a part of the school community. Remote classes have also participated in their home school's spirit days along with their in-person counterparts.

As a check in measure, a teacher survey was sent to all teachers of remote learners asking for them to share their experiences after the first two weeks of remote learning. The survey responses commented on what was going well with remote learning, the challenges that needed to be addressed, and what they needed to instruct effectively. Elementary teachers cited that classroom routines, parent communication, and student ease with navigating technology were going well. They also shared that collegial collaboration and establishing classroom community was progressing positively. Grades 5-8 teachers cited that student ease with accessing technology (specifically navigating Schoology), and student engagement/attention were going well. Additionally, teachers shared that connections were being made, the schedule was becoming easier to follow, Zoom breakout rooms were helpful for small group work and discussions as well as for making lessons active and engaging.

At the elementary level, the top challenges identified included student engagement and attention, technology issues, and student access to supplies and materials. Additionally, elementary teachers shared that class size, adjusting to the class schedule, and finding opportunities within the school day for students to connect with each other were challenges. At the 5-8 level, the challenges identified included balancing asynchronous and synchronous learning, student participation, completion of asynchronous work, and for some, access and use of Schoology. Additionally, grades 5-8 teachers cited too much time on screen, attendance and schedule confusion, and accessing feedback in Schoology as additional challenges to problem solve.

Finally, teachers across the grade levels cited needs in the following four areas: additional monitors/screens, additional hands to help with managing break out rooms, iPad stands to assist in video conferencing and to use as document cameras, and additional professional development for technology tools. This information was used by administrators to collaborate with teachers in addressing these needs.

In efforts to connect with parents and families of remote learners, a panel of administrators hosted an evening webinar on October 1, 2020. Its purpose and design were to collect questions in advance, categorize by themes, and answered by a member of the panel:

- Kari Cremascoli, Superintendent
- Heather Glowacki, Assistant Superintendent
- Katie Lee, Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction
- Cindy Anderson, Romona Elementary School Principal
- Dana Nasiakos, McKenzie Elementary School Principal
- Kate Dominique, Wilmette Junior High School Principal
- Kelly Jackson, Highest Middle School Principal

## **ENHANCED REMOTE LEARNING PROGRAM REVIEW**

October marks two months of school and signals a time to conduct a program review of enhanced remote learning model: strengths, areas for improvement, student/family and teacher needs. A program review begins with collection of data and so District 39 administered surveys to teachers, parents, and students in the fully remote program to gauge the success of the program so far, and to identify areas for improvement as the program continues:

Grades 3-4:	Student Remote Learning Survey
Grades 5-8:	Student Remote Learning Survey
D39 Parent:	Parent Remote Learning Survey
D39 Remote Staff:	Remote Teaching Needs

Survey responses were received from 368 parents (parents were asked to fill out a survey for each child enrolled), 177 elementary students (grade 3 and 4 were surveyed), and 277 students in grades 5-8. All 44 remote teachers participated and provided responses on their needs survey.

## **PARENT AND STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

A summary of the survey results are presented in the tables below. The parent and student surveys were designed to have corresponding questions with the only difference being the wording to appeal to the respective audiences. Immediately following the tables are summaries of the responses received to the open-ended questions of the survey.

Parents and students were asked questions regarding total engagement, time spent in synchronous learning (screen time), connections to school, ease of access for technology and adult support, and engagement with peers. Below is the data resulting from these questions.

### **Total Student Engagement**

	Too Little	Just Right	Too much
<b><u>PARENT QUESTION:</u></b> D39's remote learning plan calls for a specific number of total engagement minutes each day, both synchronous and asynchronous (PreK and Kindergarten = 120 minutes; Grades 1-8 = 300 minutes). Taking this into account, is the amount of work your child receives:	9%	78%	13%
	Not enough time!	The right amount of time!	Too much time!
<b><u>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</u></b> How much time do you spend each day on remote learning?	6.4%	79.1%	14.5%
<b><u>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</u></b> How much time do you spend each day on remote learning?	2.2%	70%	27.8%

### **Time Spent Synchronous Learning**

	Too Little	Just Right	Too much
<b><u>PARENT QUESTION:</u></b> D39's remote learning plan calls for a specific number of live synchronous learning each day (PreK and Kindergarten = 90 minutes; Grades 1-8 = 150 minutes). Taking this into account, is the amount of work your child receives:	12.5%	72.8%	14.7%

	Not enough	The right amount	Too much
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> Throughout the day you have live Zoom meetings with your teachers. How important is this face to face (live) time with your teacher to you?	10.5%	65.7%	14.7%
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> Throughout the day you have live Zoom meetings with your teachers. How important is this face to face (live) time with your teacher to you?	10.5%	56%	23.8%

### Connections To School

	Not very connected	Somewhat Connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> How connected does your child feel to their home school?	32.1%	34.8%	21.2%	12%
	I don't feel like I'm a part of my school	I feel like I'm a part of my school sometimes	I feel like I'm a part of my school most of the time	I feel like I'm a true Central Fox, Harper Dolphin, McKenzie Cheetah or Romona Fox
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> Do you feel like you are part of your school?	15.1%	19.2%	32.9%	32.9%
	I don't feel connected	I feel connected sometimes	I feel connected most of the time	I feel very connected
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How connected do you feel to your school?	19.9%	39.9%	33.7%	6.5%

### Connections To Teachers

	Not very connected	Somewhat Connected	Reasonably connected	Well connected
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> How connected does your child feel to their teacher?	9%	27.2%	32.3%	31.5%
	I don't feel like they know me or I know them	Sometimes I feel like they know me and I know them.	Most of the time I feel like they know me and I know them	I feel very close with my teacher
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How close do you feel to your teacher?	4.1%	21.5%	51.2%	23.3%%
	I don't feel connected	I feel connected sometimes	I feel connected most of the time	I feel very connected
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How connected do you feel to your teachers?	6.3%	30.3%	49.4%	14%

## Ease Of Access To Technology

	Very challenging to access	Somewhat challenging to access	Somewhat easy to access	Very easy to access
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> Consistency and ease of use has been our goal for remote learners. How accessible are your child's assignments?	9%	17.1%	38.3%	41.3%
	It is difficult to access SeeSaw/Zoom	I can usually access SeeSaw/Zoom	I've had no problems accessing SeeSaw/Zoom	
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTIONS:</b> How easy is it for you to access See Saw?	1.2%	25%	73.8%	
How easy is it for you to access Zoom on time for your classes?	3.5%	53.8%	42.8%	
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTIONS:</b> How easy is it for you to find your assignments, agendas, and calendar in Schoology?	5.8%	54.7%	39.5%	
How easy is it for you to access Zoom on time for your classes?	2.5%	56.7%	40.7%	

## Adult Support

	Significant adult support	Moderate Adult support	Little to no adult support
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> During remote learning, my child requires...	16.3%	38.6%	45.1%
	I need a lot of help	I sometimes need help	I don't need help. I have been independent
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How much help do you need from an adult in your home while you are remote learning?	2.3%	69.9%	27.7%
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How much help do you need from an adult in your home while you are remote learning?	1.5%	48.4%	50.2%

## Peer Connections

	Not engaging with peers	Somewhat engaging with peers	Engaged with peers
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> While remote learning, my child is...	23.1%	55.7%	21.2%

	No, it has been hard to make friends.	I have made some new friends in my class	I have made many new friends this year!
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> Have you been able to make friends this year?	31.2%	56.1%	12.7%
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> Have you been able to make friends this year?	52.9%	44.2%	2.9%

	I don't feel like they know me or I know them	Sometimes I feel like they know me and I know them	Most of the time I feel like they know me and I know them	I feel very close with my classmates!
<b>3-4 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How close do you feel to other students in your class?	11%	30.6%	39.9%	15.5%
	I don't feel connected.	I feel connected sometimes.	I feel connected most of the time.	I feel very connected!
<b>5-8 STUDENT QUESTION:</b> How connected do you feel to your classmates	52.9%	44.2%	29.5%	7.3%

### **Enhanced Remote Learning 2nd Semester Enrollment**

	Unlikely	Unsure	Likely
<b>PARENT QUESTION:</b> At this time, how likely are you to keep your child enrolled into remote learning for second semester?	9.5%	35.6%	54.9%

### **PARENT OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY**

Parents and students were asked open-ended questions regarding communication, peer relationships, the impact of remote learning, and the positive aspects of remote learning. Students also shared how they might improve remote learning for the future.

#### ***Communication***

Parent comments were generally positive toward the teachers and their regular communication with them. Families indicated they would like more information about the curriculum, individual student progress, and assignments. Specific to 5-8 were comments that they would like information about student engagement and work completion from the different teachers.

Many families shared that in their perspective there was a lack of information from the district about the enhanced remote program, causing difficulty when making the decision to enroll their child in the program. There is also a feeling of disconnectedness from home (elementary) schools, and all families indicated that remote program-specific communication from the building administrators would be helpful.

### ***Peer Relationships***

At the elementary level it has been difficult for younger students to connect virtually with others in the classroom. Many students are quiet and reluctant to participate, and with breakout rooms, they vary in levels of participation. Many parents requested time built into the day for social interaction and more conversation during instruction. Parents at the 5-8 level also desired an increase in social time and interaction during instructional periods. They highlighted the use of break out rooms for small group projects, and suggested additional social opportunities such as recess or PTO-sponsored events to help peers connect. The overall sentiment in both surveys was that parents recognize that this is a unique situation, and relationship building is difficult. This was a recurring theme throughout the survey responses.

### ***Impact on Well-Being***

Elementary families indicated an understanding of the unique situation, and often shared that there was additional stress from the remote learning environment, but could not decipher whether that was due to the pandemic or remote learning itself. The majority of families shared that in spite of difficulties, they were making it work. There was high variability in responses to the impact of remote learning from frustration (*My child is not engaged, and seems unhappy*) to feeling very happy with how their child is doing (*It keeps my child busy and my child is learning new things. They look forward to class*). Parents cite the biggest impact on students fall in the areas of screen time and a decrease in opportunities for social interaction. Parents cite the impact as stemming from large class sizes and an imbalance of breaks and/or independent work time with synchronous learning.

At the 5-8 level many families indicated that the impact of remote learning has been positive or neutral. They cite an improvement in student skill development in the areas of resilience, time management, problem solving, flexibility, and self-direction. Some even noted their child is thriving in this environment without the added social pressures of middle school and junior high. Parents at the 5-8 level continue to share a desire for increased opportunities to connect with peers and share that many of their children feel overwhelmed with the amount of work and screen time.

### ***Positive Aspects of Remote Learning***

Parents across the grade levels shared that the positive aspects of remote learning include an increase in family time, opportunities for students to move and snack during the day, a more flexible schedule without the added pressures of the morning rush and drop off/pick up from school, and an opportunity to feel more connected and informed about their child's learning. Some parents shared that having this connection has improved conversations around school work, and they are able to help support their child in their learning more readily. Nearly all parents shared that the feeling of safety from the virus and exposure to the virus, along with the consistency of knowing for the long term their child's schedule and daily routine helped to decrease a stressful environment in their homes.

### ***Ways to Improve Remote Learning***

When asked about feedback to contribute to remote learning's future success, parent responses fell into three main categories: reduce class sizes, provide more opportunities for social interaction, and having less synchronous time or more breaks throughout the day. Additionally, many parents requested information about transition and options for January, sharing that if remote learning continues they would prefer the current classes stay intact.

## **STUDENT OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY**

### ***Impact of Remote Learning***

Students were asked about the easiest parts of remote learning, and identified that accessing the technology was easy, as was access to materials. Many students also shared that having time to sleep in, and not having stressful morning routines made remote learning easier. At the 5-8 level students also shared that the absence of social pressures (bullying) and the ability to flexibly move around the house make remote learning easier for them.

In contrast, students were asked about what made remote learning difficult, and overwhelmingly at the elementary level, students shared that technology issues were a barrier to remote learning. Students at the 5-8 level also cited technology and connection issues as creating difficulty when remote learning. At both levels students also regularly shared that not seeing friends in person or having less time for social interactions was difficult.

### ***Positive Aspects of Remote Learning***

Across the grade levels, student identified the same positive aspects of remote learning: flexibility, staying safe from virus exposure, easy morning routines, and having more time with family. Students at the elementary level also shared that remote learning is fun, the teachers are great, and they are excited to be able to meet students from other schools who they will get to be in person with when they go to Highcrest. Students at 5-8 shared that the asynchronous work, less social pressure, and having choice in how and where you learn were other positives of remote learning.

### ***Ways to improve Remote Learning***

Student suggestions for improvements to remote learning fell in two main areas: less screen time/more breaks, and more opportunities for social interaction. This was consistent from third grade through eighth grade.

## **REMOTE TEACHER NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS**

A summary of the survey results are presented in the table below. The teacher survey was designed to check in on their current needs. The information gathered from the two-week check in were used to formulate the questions. The administration is using this information to provide what the teachers need in terms of tools as well as other forms of support (i.e. training/professional development, human supports etc.). Immediately following the teacher needs table is a summary of the responses received to the open-ended questions of the survey.

What needs do you have to improve your teaching in the remote program?	A second monitor	Additional tech training	iPad stand	Additional tech support
Yes	13	13	15	8
No	31	31	29	36

## **TEACHER OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE SUMMARY**

### ***Additional Training/Support/Tech-related support***

Teachers offered information and/or requested additional training and supports in the following areas or formats:

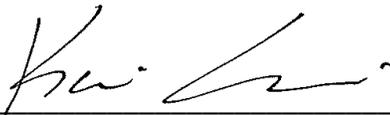
- Second monitor will be necessary if teaching location changes; currently using Smartboard as secondary screen.
- No specific need; always open to further knowledge in any area; time to dig deeper/learn more.

- Scheduled time with technology teachers/technicians for quick question/answer sessions.
- Tech-based professional development that provides strategies to support our student needs such as how to engage remote learners, how to manage small group instruction, how to support IEP/504 accommodations remotely, etc.
- Tech help/tips/tricks -- Best ways to use tools/apps efficiently (Schoology, Seesaw, ScootPad, Zoom); Chromebooks tech support for families; Zoom co-hosts.

**Next Steps/Conclusion**

A targeted review of the Enhanced Full Remote Program is in process. A team of teachers and administrators will review all survey data. In addition, paraprofessionals supporting remote learners will also be surveyed. After gathering all feedback, the team will evaluate the current program and identify 2-3 areas that can be strengthened and improve. Based on identified areas for improvement, recommendations will be made, and an action plan developed. The Board of Education can expect an update at a future meeting.

**Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,**



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**Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent**