

THE CLOSE TO 2020

The end to the 2019-2020 School Year will be an ending we will never forget. Years from now, the history books will put their spin on this event, and the hindsight thoughts of the Spring of 2020 decisions will be very interesting to read someday. What our students, staff, families, and community can do today is be proud of the way they persevered through this unprecedented event that was out of their hands. It is hard to believe that the last time our students stepped foot in our hallways was March 17th. I am still extremely thankful that we had those two days that week with our students to get everything in place and create a touch of closure to what turned out to be a quarter of remote learning.

As an educator and an advocate for kids, I understand that our decisions impact young lives for years to come. Decisions were out of our hands throughout this pandemic when health officials, state officials, and others made that decision to close schools. However, we must keep in mind that every time the decision to close school is made, we know that we have students that won't eat. We know that we have students that will wake up and not have an adult there for them, and they may not see that adult for days. We know that we have students that will deal with unimaginable things. When school is not in session, our parents manage work, educating their child, and during unfamiliar times, parental balance and stress is magnified. We know that COVID-19 has hospitalized individuals that have dealt with the virus, but we also know many individuals, including young people, were hospitalized with mental health issues, created by the strain this pandemic has put on individuals and families. These are very scary thoughts regarding both sides of the coin. Knowing what students go through when they are not in school is why "snow days" are such a mentally draining decision.

As we close the chapter to the 2019-2020 School Year, we are able to now start thinking about positive changes, events, and dynamics that will begin to allow students to heal. On Monday, May 11th, our Governor announced important changes regarding the future that will positively impact the health and well-being of our students. That day included an announcement that Baseball and Softball could begin, but it also included an announcement that weight facilities within schools could be opened for strength and conditioning. This is not about sports, but the mental health of our students. More importantly, this announcement has led to the opportunity for schools to re-open for summer school. Staff, students, and families have busted their tails for weeks to try to keep up and maximize their education remotely. This announcement now allows schools the opportunity to do what they do best: teach in front of kids, positively influence kids, and support kids. In the coming days, summer school, credit recovery, ESY, and strength and conditioning plans will be provided to parents. We are very excited to see kids again, and we will ensure all of you that we will do this the right way, provide a safe environment, and take necessary precautions.

Many of our leaders have had to bear the weight of the world throughout this crisis. Many people have had to make difficult decisions knowing that not everyone would accept or appreciate those decisions. Dr. Matt Blomstedt (resident of Central City), the Commissioner of Education, has done an excellent job of guiding schools through this situation, trying to bring

organization to many entities of the state, and serving as a liaison between schools and the government. One thing that he has stressed is flexibility throughout this situation and providing local leaders the opportunity to make decisions. Unfortunately, some school leaders across the state have been willing to relinquish decisions and pass those decisions to others in Lincoln, or wherever, to avoid facing criticism of their decision. That has not been our stand, and we understand the need for local control and local decisions. At the local level, we know what our kids and community need, because we know our kids and our families. Central City has different needs than Omaha, Lincoln, or even Grand Island. Throughout this rash of information overload, we have been slow to make decisions with the end goal of maximizing our students' education. We can also stand by our decisions, because we have been diligent throughout this process of doing what is best for the students of Central City.

As this article is published on Thursday, it will officially mark the end to the 2019-2020 School Year. We cannot thank you enough for your support throughout this situation. This has been a very difficult period of time for all of us, but some good has come out of this. This time has taught all of us to not take things for granted and value those around us. Situations like this stress the importance of school and community relationships. Central City Public Schools is proud to be a part of the community of Central City. With each year, the community/school relationship has only strengthened. THANK YOU for all that you have done to support us throughout this crazy end to this school year!