

Knowing Your Weiser School District

October, 2021

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Teachers and other staff have stepped up all over the district to help cover staffing shortfalls on a daily basis – see page 2

Exciting School District News

Although the start of the 2021-22 school year has presented a few challenges, the first quarter of the year is now complete and the Weiser School District has some incredible things happening. A few exciting highlights include:

Pioneer School

- Full-time kindergarten was reinstated as an option this year
- Over 80 students are participating in the fall after-school program designed to provide students with additional academic support this fall
- Pioneer's recent Math Challenge generated record patron support for students and for the school

Park School

- Park is instituting new iStation software that is intended to help teachers target student literacy skills and improve intervention opportunities for students
- Over 20 students are participating in the fall after-school program

Teachers at **both** Pioneer and Park are participating in a professional development learning group that includes teachers from several other local school districts, facilitated by Education Northwest, which is intended to help identify powerful research based literacy teaching strategies and essential student interventions for teacher participants.

Weiser Middle School

- WMS is implementing a new design during homeroom period that is intended to offer a higher level of academic support for students who need additional support in specific classes
- WMS hosted several local teams in an academic competition this month
- WMS math teachers are in their 3rd and final year working with Boise State University on a pilot program (ROOT) designed to identify best practices in teaching middle level mathematics
- Students are achieving in Accelerated Reader and have gathered more reading points through the first quarter than they have in recent years

Weiser High School

- A new course at WHS, Music Theatre taught by choir teacher Mr. Mike Turner, has 26 students enrolled and presented two community showings of *The Headless Horseman* this week
- WHS is partnering with Comfort Zone Heating and Cooling to offer students work experience in HVAC through a certification program called STRAP (School To Registered Apprenticeship Program) where students earn dual credit and work experience as they work toward their HVAC certification
- We currently have 52 students taking advantage of Advanced Opportunity funds who are enrolled in dual credit courses at WHS
- Twelve WHS FFA students are participating the National FFA Convention this week in Indianapolis
- An initiative by WHS student Jaiden Gomez landed the soccer program a portable scoreboard for the soccer field at WHS
- Devyn Young initiated a student led blood drive at WHS which netted 9.5 liters of blood for the Red Cross
- CTE courses have strong enrollment, and thanks to the recent hiring of a full-time school nurse for the District we are preparing to reinstate the CNA certification courses at WHS

Extra-curricular Activities

- HS Football qualified for the state tournament
 - Volleyball qualified for the state tournament
 - Girls Cross Country qualified for the state meet
 - Boys Soccer competed for the district championship that was ultimately decided on penalty kicks following two overtime periods
 - 7th grade football won the SRV championship
 - Marching Band is competing in the district competition this weekend
- **Teachers have stepped up** all over the district to cover classes when we have been short substitutes this fall, and others have accepted new teaching assignments as a result of unforeseen circumstances that led to last minute vacancies within the District this fall.
- Indianhead Academy has strong enrollment and has already had one graduate this year. More are expected following the current term.

Employment Opportunities with the WSD

The Board of Trustees voted in October to boost classified employee salaries and provide bonus pay for substitutes.

Para-educators, custodians, secretaries, kitchen staff, bus drivers, and other classified employees saw their hourly wages increase in October thanks to a move by Trustees to help improve support and compensation for District staff. Classified employees play a critical role in the overall education program for the WSD.

Additionally, thanks to grant funding made available to school districts by Governor Little, substitutes in all areas will receive bonus pay for their efforts this fall. School districts all over the state are struggling to employ enough substitute teachers, and Governor Little stepped in to help. Substitutes will see a daily bonus (up to an additional \$25/day) on top of their daily rate, and will qualify for additional bonus pay for subbing in any area for 10 days or 20 days this fall (as much as a \$200 bonus after day 10 and another \$250 after day 20 in most areas.)

The WSD offers employees challenging but rewarding working conditions and assignments, great working teams, a favorable annual work year, and benefits for full-time employees. Looking to join a terrific team and give back to your community – consider checking out the Weiser School District. We are currently hiring substitute teachers, bus drivers, and we may even have a couple of para-professional positions available. Inquire at the WSD office at 925 Pioneer Road, or look online at www.weiserschools.org.

Substitute teachers and other staff have an opportunity to receive additional bonus pay for their efforts this fall

Check out employment opportunities with the WSD by inquiring at the WSD Office located at 925 Pioneer Road, or visit the District website at www.weiserschools.org

Understanding Federal COVID Funding

In response to addressing the COVID-19 crisis on a national level, federal funding has been made available to families and organizations such as businesses, state governments, and other public and private entities over the past several months in order to assist each group to maintain operations in light of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

School districts across the nation received grant opportunities made available as a result of the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) passed by President Donald Trump on March 27, 2020. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund), a subgrant opportunity within CARES, provides funding for schools across the nation and was made available through three separate grants (ESSER I, ESSER II, and ESSER III). Additional subgrants have been established by groups receiving CARES funding such as state governors, health care organizations, and other community based groups.

These federal funds have been made available to help schools remain open for in-person learning, provide additional support for students in need or who have fallen behind due to the pandemic, to help schools address COVID related conditions that create a barrier to student learning, and a few other specifically outlined uses.

Misconceptions exist as to the intent and use of the funds by education groups and school districts – the information can be confusing. ESSER grants provide for districts to be **reimbursed for meeting qualifying expenses**, as outlined in the law. They are not general fund dollars provided to districts to meet general fund expenditures. For more information about CARES funding, ESSER funding, or allowable expenses based on the laws, see the following links:

CARES Act - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748>

ESSERF-<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/education-stabilization-fund/elementary-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund/>

Allowable Expenses -<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/federal-programs/prf/files/ESSER-Use-of-Funds.pdf>

Our COVID-19 Journey

From the beginning of the pandemic (spring of 2020), it has been the desire of the WSD to continue to provide students the best possible learning experiences while taking into account evolving, unpredictable and changing conditions. Since the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, maintaining in-person learning for students has been a priority. Highlights of some of the efforts include:

Spring 2020

- Following spring break, Weiser staff were provided two days to prepare for the launch of remote student learning. Staff prepared online learning activities, prepared student work packets, and checked out school computers to students who needed devices in order to access their work. Many schools around Idaho took a week, two weeks, or even three weeks or more before offering any student learning opportunities.
- WHS created an amazing digital spring awards assembly and held an outside graduation ceremony followed by a graduate parade through town that turned out to be a huge hit.
- The WSD offered high school students an in-person summer school opportunity, offered elementary students an in-person STEM Camp experience, and a summer school experience to students who qualified for migrant services.

2020-21 School Year

- In an effort to meet families where they needed to be, the WSD offered students an opportunity to learn from home if they chose. Elementary students enrolled in our online school were assigned Weiser teachers and were placed into classrooms with other online students. Secondary students attended synchronous online courses at WHS or WMS.
- The WSD began school on August 20th as planned. Many districts delayed the start of school for students, some for several weeks, in an effort to provide staff time to prepare lessons. Some school districts in states around Idaho never fully returned students to in-person learning during the year. Staff in the WSD worked hard up front in order to avoid a disruption to the start of the school year for students and families.
- The District began the year implementing an AB schedule, where students alternated between online and in-person learning. However, in late September the District implemented a schedule that brought students to school four days a week and had them participate in at-home learning on Wednesdays. The schedule remained in place for the year.
- Throughout the year, staff spent considerable time doing research and participating in professional development opportunities in order to find new resources and learn new ways to prepare and present lessons for online students – a practice most had not prepared for as public education teachers.
- Extra-curricular activities continued throughout the year. Although some competitions had to be cancelled, the athletic department worked continuously to reschedule games. The Governor's office and the State Board of Education placed restrictions on fan attendance during winter sports. Each time new regulations were announced, WHS and WMS had a plan in place for their next game that met the requirements and allowed for fans to attend the contests. Districts were presented 4-5 iterations of new regulations throughout the winter, and the WSD responded immediately each time.
- In-person award assemblies, a HS prom, and in-person HS and kindergarten graduation ceremonies were held.
- Only two days of school for Pioneer School students had to be cancelled as a result of COVID-19 disruptions in December.
- The District once again offered an in-person summer school for secondary students, a summer STEM Camp for elementary students, and a summer learning experience for students who qualified for migrant student status.

2021-22

- School began as scheduled for students on August 19, with in-person learning being held five days per week.
- To date, two days of school for Park School students have been cancelled due to COVID related disruptions that resulted in staff shortages.
- **Maintaining full-time in-person learning continues to be our priority.**