

Impact Aid Hearing
11/19/20

Doreen Warren, Lori Owens, Dawn Bishop-Moore, Darla Johnson, Evelyn Bigby

Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19 and closure of Fort Belknap Reservation

LO gave presentation on budgets, including CARES Act funding and provided links for funding charts.

DBM asked about extra expenses incurred due to COVID. LO stated that, so far, all extra expenses were covered in the amounts given in the CARES Act funding spreadsheet. We have taken on some extra staff, but those costs are mitigated by the unwillingness of subs to come in to the building. LO noted that there have been some comments made in the community about the district not spending CARES money to hire extra people. Unfortunately, while we have the funds available, we simply cannot get people to work.

DBM asked if holiday breaks would be the same this year. DW stated that they would and that the calendar had not changed.

DBM asked if the governor's new mandates affect the school. DW stated that most of his new restrictions didn't seem to apply to schools.

DW gave a brief summary of her most recent meeting with local health officials. There was some concern that the new governor may undo to COVID regulations put in place by the current governor. The County would like the district to look into COVID testing in the schools. The testing would primarily be for student and staff with symptoms. DW will look into who would pay for this testing.

The Jr/Sr High School has been 100% remote for about two weeks, due to so many staff being in quarantine. The students will be back in the building on November 30th. Overall, the number of COVID cases in the school have gone down but the numbers may increase when students and staff return after the holiday.

LO mentioned that the Impact Aid Coronavirus Relief Act had passed in Congress. This means that schools can use last year's surveys/student counts and acreage on this year's application.

DJ asked how student grades have been. EB emphasized the need for parents to make sure packets are returned. The elementary has had packets from last Spring returned this year. Parents need to be educated on the process of remote learning. K-6 is currently offering online tutoring after school. Hybrid students have markedly higher grades at the elementary, that do 100% remote students. There was no representative from the high school to discuss grades.

DJ pointed out that it is hard for working parents to keep up with their students' work and their job. Nurses at I.H.S. are now working twelve-hour shifts. She would like to try to find a way to get through to the parents who have students who are struggling. Many students don't have support and encouragement at home.

It was recognized that it will take years for students to catch up after the pandemic. The education system during the pandemic has been difficult for both students and teachers.

DJ asked if it was possible to have kids working at their own pace instead of at grade levels. EB pointed out that this is called differentiated learning and that we have some great programs in place such as interventions. However, these programs are effective in a regular year but are difficult to implement remotely.

EB stated that this has been a good discussion and that we need to keep talking and bringing ideas to the table so that we are prepared when we return to normal.

A second hearing will be scheduled in January to address any unanswered questions.