



April 2020—Issue 2

The Grizzlies Gazette



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT



Hello YCS Family! I hope you are doing well and are beginning to adjust to our “new way of work” for a while. Although this learning has been challenging for all of us, it has brought a few benefits that I have noticed. First, the staff has been collaborating more than ever before as you have been developing the grade level and department plans. Next, the staff has been “enjoying one another”! I watched a show and tell that the Holmes Elementary staff had during last week’s staff meeting. It was super fun and I learned so much personal information about our talented staff that I had never know before. Lastly, district administrators have FINALLY had the opportunity to attend staff meetings and get to talk and work with our staff. Most of us are only in our second year with the district and have been dealing with so many challenging situations since we arrived that we have not had the pleasure of just sitting and talking with many of you. I am so grateful that during the last (4) weeks I have had the opportunity to join in on staff and grade-level meetings, talk on the phone with staff and learn about many of you on a personal level. I count it all joy! There ARE good things happening in spite of this terrible virus! I look forward to working closely with you over the next two months to ensure our students get the academic and social-emotional support they deserve.

We are excited that our Continuity of Learning Plan was approved! Dr. Lopez did an exceptional job including the voices of all staff in the document. Thank you, Carlos! Although many of you did not see the original document, those who reviewed and provided input did. Those persons included the leadership of our both unions and building and central office administrators. They will confirm that the document began with about 40 pages and included many of your notes from your team and committee meetings as well as some specific quotes from teachers. It was his intention to be as inclusive as possible. When we pared the original document down it was 34 pages. Once submitted, we were reminded that this plan is the overview and is a working document. We were asked to streamline it so that it could be electronically uploaded to the State. When that occurred, some of the details needed to be removed. I want you to know that we will continue to link your grade level, departmental and committee plans to the document so that your work can be displayed for all. We know that each of you are working tirelessly on behalf of our students and we want to honor the input that you provide.

As we inch towards full implementation, we promise to continue to support you, listen to you and provide a seat for you at the table. We are certainly in uncharted territory and it will take ALL of us for a full recovery. Thank you for all that you do on behalf of our students at YCS!

Stay Safe. Stay Home. Stay Connected.
Alena Zachery Ross — Superintendent

Business Office

The business office continues to work diligently to make sure all the invoices that are coming in the mail are being paid and are working with every vendor to make sure that their invoices are paid.



We want to assure all our staff that they will be paid through June 30,2020, end of school year. If you have any payroll questions, please email Judith Wills. If you have received any invoices from the vendors, especially the building secretaries, please email them to Renee Carrico and Barbara Boone. We will respond to your questions as quickly as possible to meet your needs during this time. We appreciate your patience and understanding through these unprecedented times.

We are committed to continue to follow the direction of our county leadership, whether it is staying home when needed or working remotely or working on site when needed. We will be here to support the District to operate smoothly during this unprecedented time. We are definite we will get through this together.

We are Stronger Together.
Priya Nayak — Director of Business and Finance



Office of the Assistant Superintendent

Peter Drucker, the well-known business consultant, once said: *“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”* Let’s get out there and “create” how we can develop positive relationships with our students and families on an online remote learning platform. We need to explore innovative and creative ways to “hardwire” remote learning to develop the natural

intelligence of our learners. We need to use this new platform to engage our students as leaders of their own learning by exposing them to highly structured lessons, projects, and new learning experiences that engage our students in the acquisition of key knowledge and skills and the development of connections so that they can pursue powerful questions, tackle complex problems, collaborate via remote learning with diverse people and experts, imagine new possibilities, and communicate their ideas in varied ways.

As we begin to roll out and implement our online delivery of instruction via a remote learning model, I encourage each of you to *slow down and reflect throughout the journey, focus on a less is more concept, go slow to go fast, trust the process, stay the course, and keep posing questions. As you enter this new journey, focus on modeling the four pillars of relationships - “I see you,” “I hear You,” “I value you,” and “I respect you.”* Checking In on how our students are doing is critical. Aim at having a reflective question that allows your students to take turns and share how they are doing. Showing empathy and honoring student voices is important at this time. Our students need to hear how much you have missed them, love them, and how glad you are to hear from them. Keep your first day light in spirit. As you move to formal instruction, make sure that you take time to chunk instruction so that students are clear of what they are discussing, learning, and processing. Please take the time to master all of the components of Google Classroom, conducting a Zoom Meetings, and other online tools that you are using for instruction.

Expect the unexpected, know that there are going to be many glitches. Learn to stop, breathe, laugh, relax, and restart. Enjoy your students throughout the process, encourage them to try new ideas, to be creative, to innovate, and to set weekly learning goals. Introduce your students to your children and family if you like.

Again, we know that YOU GOT THIS! We know because we have heard you speak and share powerful creative ideas on how to best serve our students. We at YCS, are PROUD of your commitment, passion, love, and sincere appreciation that each of you has about educating our students. For this, we are personally grateful, thankful, and appreciative! **Our YCS Staff ROCKS!**

Carlos Lopez — Office of the Assistant Superintendent

Human Resources

A thank you and shout out to staff for asking clarifying questions that provided the basis for the FAQ created by Human Resources! Remember that this is a living document and will change as needed as new information is communicated to the District. Please continue to feel free to ask questions, this is new territory for all of us.



For easy access to communication with Human Resources email Sue McCarty at smccarty3@ycschools.us or Lois Nowling at lnowling5@ycschools.us.

Clarification for payroll has been given and staff will be paid throughout the entire 2019-20 school year.

All employees must be available for work during their regular work hours in order to receive compensation unless documentation is provided for a COVID19 related illness or one of the conditions outlined in the [Executive Order 2020-36](#). This does not negate the ability to use personal, sick or vacation time (for applicable staff) per the negotiation union contracts.

The District has been tasked with providing meaningful work for all staff members. To make sure we consider feedback and voice from staff and administration, several surveys have been sent out. Please bear with us as we gather information. We know that completing survey after survey can get overwhelming and disruptive. We will attempt to limit these requests as much as possible. Many positions will have to be modified to accommodate Executive Order 2020-35 and social distancing. A Work Reassignment Committee is hard at work using staff feedback, administration input, collaboration with the YCEA and YCSESPA and data from the surveys to realign work temporarily during the COVID19 Pandemic. Each employee impacted by the realignment will receive a letter outlining the new assignments. Where applicable training will be provided.

Please check your email at least 2 times per day. If you are experiencing difficulties with your email please contact technology support at techsupport@ycschools.us.

Sue McCarty — Human Resources Director



“Real heroes don’t wear capes, they work with children”





Student Support Services

We are actively preparing to “go live” on April 27! Thank you to our staff who have been meeting and discussing ways to be creative in bringing instructional as well as ancillary services to our families. We are excited that our students and their families will have the technological resources to be able to do this.

We have been getting tremendous support from each of our specialized staff. You have gone above and beyond in continuing to conduct IEP’s, reaching out to your caseloads, partnering with the general education staff and providing me ideas. We truly appreciate everything you’re doing to help your students during these uncertain times. We appreciate your communicating with us; reaching out to us, and most of all being patient with us.

Please take care of yourself. We hope you’re continuing to stay safe and well!

E. Ruth Jordan — Student Support Services Director

Communications Department

Greetings from the Marketing and Communications Department! This week has been very busy with building meetings and various communications with parents, staff, and the community!



The weekly district update can be found here! This information will also be shared with parents and the community! Our goal is to provide an update each week to keep you informed of the district's happenings! [Week of April 19th District Update](#)

A social media reminder! As we move into a more digital world of learning, we must adhere to policies set forth to protect our students and families. YCS has an official Facebook and Twitter page that is managed by the Marketing and Communications Department. Still, school buildings also have their own that is led by the principal, designated web tech, or teacher. We must ensure that any pictures, videos, or screenshots of YCS students are approved with permission to publish form on file. We have also found several staff accounts that have pictures of themselves with students, which should not happen unless direct permission is granted from the parent or guardian. Student pictures should only be on YCS administered social media accounts--not personal accounts. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the building administrator or me. Please be mindful of this when we begin our online learning--class screenshots should be avoided.

Stay Safe. Stay Home. Stay Connected.

Taryn Willis — Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Food Service

This week was the first week that we transitioned to distributing meals on Thursdays. With all of our foodservice staff back we are able to expand our production and open up 4 kitchens (High School, Middle School, Erickson, and Homes). This expansion will allow us to provide food for 10 distribution sites... **Ypsilanti High School, Erickson Elementary, ACCE High, Holmes Elementary, Arbor One Apts, Parkridge Community Center*, Sycamore Meadows, Christian Love Fellowship, Strong Tower Ministries* and West Willow Community Center.**

Willow Community Center.

A special thank you to Washtenaw County staff Teresa Gillotti and Alize Payne for procuring 400 face masks for our staff and volunteers. Safety for all continues to be our primary focus to ensure that we can provide for our students.

Our operation would not be able to continue without the support of our wonderful food service staff. They continue to show up to provide for our students. We are truly STRONGER TOGETHER.

Stay Safe,

Tiffany Houston — Director of Food Services



“Education is the most powerful weapon for changing the world”





Facilities

While YCS remains physically closed due to the suspension of face to face instruction K-12 in the State of Michigan under Governor Whitmer's order, the YCS Facilities department continues to support the district as essential workers. As essential workers, we will continue to support the operations of the district's food distribution program, Continuity of Learning Plan, and maintain our facilities and grounds at a basic level.

Our department continues to support the YCS food distribution program. Our grounds team delivers food and supplies to sites on Thursdays while our custodial team supports through the cleaning of each of the four food preparation sites (Erickson, YCMS, Holmes, and YCHS) as well as stocking paper products for the kitchens and restrooms in use district-wide.

In support of the YCS Continuity of Learning Plan, our department provides coverage during the essential teaching staff entry process, which was completed this week. During the entries this week, the staff was able to access curriculum, supplies, and resources to support distance learning. Teaching staff also located classroom technology, allowing our facilities department the opportunity to consolidate them per building. The technology department is in the process of preparing these student devices for deployment. Our staff also took delivery of 2200 headphones and will distribute those to buildings next week in preparation and support for the upcoming student technology distribution.

Lastly, our facilities staff are monitoring and maintaining our buildings and properties. We have reduced our tasks down to the "bare essentials" since the suspension of face to face instruction and the ongoing emergency orders. We monitor building security remotely through our All-Star Alarm Company, with our Total Connect phone application and physical walkthroughs. During our physical walkthroughs, we are looking at exterior windows, exterior doors and the overall safety and security of our facilities. We provide basic pool service for our two pools to ensure that these facilities are in good operation and functioning properly so they are available once the decision is made to return to more traditional district operations. We are not maintaining them to be swim ready at this time, just minimal attention to preserve these assets. Lastly, our heating, cooling, and ventilation (HVAC) tech remotely monitors most buildings in the district. For buildings that are not available remotely, we make physical inspections. Again, we are not maintaining the HVAC systems for comfort, only preserving our assets.

Please be sure to follow all health and safety guidelines and orders enacted by our local, state and federal governments. **Stay Home, Stay Safe, Stay Connected.**

Aaron Rose — Director of District Operations

Transportation

Thank you to the Ypsilanti Community Schools District and the Technology Department. The Transportation office staff received district devices and will be able to work remotely as we move forward during this unprecedented time.

To the transportation staff, I appreciate your patience as we work through this closure. Our business is transporting the students of YCS to and from safely and right now for the safety of all, we can't provide that service. Please continue to check your district email and the district website for important information. As we move forward, patience from all is a must. Work will look different. It is important that you make every attempt to participate in all transportation and/or district professional development meetings or training as they are announced.

It is my hope that you and your family stay well and be strong during this pandemic. I am available and will keep you informed as I receive information. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding transportation.

Together we are stronger, saving lives.

Kim Searcy — Director of Transportation



"Thank you for planting the seeds of knowledge"

**SAVING
LIVES**



Technology

Technology has been hard at work preparing devices for take home use. We are currently setting up iPad devices for distribution and hope to be finished by the end of this week. We are receiving the first shipment of Chromebooks for our grades 2-12 and expect them all to arrive by the end of this week. Once they do; we will begin immediate preparations to deploy those as early as possible. More to follow once we have a good idea of when they arrive and how long each device takes to set up.

This week, we have scheduled another staff pick-up day for Thursday, April 23rd from 10am to 3pm at the Central Administration Offices. To help provide technology service please continue to use techsupport@ycschools.us (which is monitored by multiple technology staff) or email staff directly (if you know who you are trying to reach).

The district is in the process of securing a Zoom site license for each building, and a webinar to be shared through the entire district. Once we have received it; we will figure out how to roll all those individual free accounts into the district account. Here are some useful Zoom resources:

Zoom Basics for Leading connections with others:

[Sign Up Free](#) or [Sign In](#)

Install the client: [Download Center](#)

[How to Schedule a Zoom meeting through Zoom Desktop App](#)

[Invite Others to Join the Meeting](#)

[How to use Zoom Breakout Rooms](#)

More Resources:

[Guide to using the Zoom platform](#)

[How to use Zoom for Online Learning](#)

[ZOOM Task Cards](#)

[Zoom Help Center](#)

[Zoom-Video-Tutorials](#)

Please stay safe and we hope you all are doing well. Thank you!
Nik Jackson - Technology Director

We will continue to keep you informed of developments in our departments twice a month. Please watch your email for the next issue.



**Teaching
saves lives.**