



Dr. Teri Staloch, Superintendent
Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools
Prior Lake American/Savage Pacer
Column run date: December 19, 2020

The year 2020 has challenged us in ways we never could have imagined and I know most of us are more than ready to leave it behind and look forward to 2021 with hope and optimism. As difficult as 2020 has been, the human spirit never ceases to amaze me. As we close out this unparalleled year, it has made me reflect on the resiliency, determination and commitment I have witnessed countless times among our Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools' staff, students and families.

I am so proud of our PLSAS staff who time and time again have found new and innovative ways to teach and to connect with students during this COVID-19 pandemic. Our teachers have taken the Distance Learning plan developed last spring and brought it to the next level, offering a structured and comprehensive learning experience for students. They have navigated Google Meets, document cameras, small groups, breakout rooms and dozens of other new things - all while serving students with patience, kindness, empathy and love.

Just as we are providing the next level of Distance Learning, we are also providing additional support for families. One example of this is the amazing support provided by our Child Nutrition Services team. They continue to provide thousands of free meals to students every week. In fact, recently our staff served nearly 44,000 non-contact, curbside meals in a single day!

Our custodial staff have been and continue to deep clean every classroom, office and common space in all of our buildings as they implement the COVID-19 Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting Plan according to guidelines and best practices provided by public health officials.

Of course none of this has been easy on parents as they juggle helping their student learn from home, while working from home themselves. Thank you for your flexibility and understanding as we implement the learning models under the MN Safe Learning Plan.

We know how important it is to provide as much support to students and parents as possible and to focus on the importance of relationships so that we can help one another through this pandemic. That's why one of the ways we are helping families is by offering additional academic support through our Kids' Company child care program. Kids' Co. serves approximately 350 students per day in our elementary schools. Staff provide students with fun activities that kids love, while also giving them the extra academic support they need while we are in Distance Learning.

Thanks to a partnership with Scott County Connect Therapy, we are able to provide parents with free mental health support for their children. Throughout January, virtual parent training sessions are being offered to help support our students through the challenges of COVID-19. There are several webinars offered ranging from how to support your child during Distance

Learning, to building resilience and developing healthy coping skills. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/PLLakers>

Another way we are working to support families is through our partnership with R.O.C.K. (Reaching Our Community's Kids). R.O.C.K. has set up Mini Stores in the entryway at each of our schools for families in need. Families can pick up food, school supplies and hygiene items, as needed. The Mini Stores are available during school hours, as well as before and after school during Kids' Company child care hours.

As we look forward to 2021, there will certainly be new opportunities and challenges. I am confident we will continue to help one another, be kind and empathetic as we face the new year together with renewed hope. Thank you for your continued support of Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools.