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Update 4/20- April vacation, Wednesday theme, Survey analysis and response

Dean Cascadden • about 2 hours ago • Monday, Apr 20 at 6:15 AM • SAU67

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Hello SAU 67 Community,

Bow District Meeting

Please go to the SAU 67 website **Bownet.org** for more information on Bow's Annual School District alternative procedures. Information meeting Tuesday at 7:00, response to feedback and possible amendments meeting Friday at 5:00 and drive through voting at BHS Saturday 9-1.

April Vacation will be changed to two long weekends

SAU 67 will run remote instruction Tuesday - Thursday 4/27-30 with the Wednesday being a Flex/Theme Day. This was a compromise decision, but it best meets the varied needs of our school community. The polling was about evenly split with a slight edge (55-45) towards school all week long, but some of the comments of people who really need a break compelled me to make the decision in favor of the two long weekends. Only 10% wanted a full week of vacation.

Outdoor facility use

Our playgrounds are closed as they are high touch areas. Other outdoor facilities are open for use by appropriately distanced small groups. Bow police have been informed of this and will break up any large group gatherings. If gatherings become problematic, we may have to restrict access to the courts, fields, tracks and paths. Some fields are closed due to being wet, please respect those individual signs.

Theme for Wednesday 4/22- Earth Day

Possible Ideas:

- Research stewardship and give examples of how to care for the earth
- Research environmental groups and talk about their work
- Do an improvement project or an outdoor cleanup with before and after photos
- Just get outside and celebrate the great outdoors !!
- <https://blog.nhstateparks.org/> Great Compilation of digital activities related to our natural resources in NH.

In the survey, theme days were not seen as being particularly useful as a third of the people rated them not wanted or useful. There is one planned for this week and one for next, and we will re-evaluate what we do for Wednesdays in May.

Where we are

We started remote learning 5 weeks ago in mid-March and it has been a very difficult transition. For some, Remote Learning, although not as good as being in school, has been a passable substitute. For others, especially for those who struggle with learning or those who have households with caregivers with increased workloads (either working from home or outside the house at their "essential" jobs), have struggled with digital instruction and the lack of face-to-face time with educational professionals. Some survey responses called for more work and structure for students who had too much free time and others begged for relief from expectations and standards that are causing emotional stress and concern for children and adults.

Bryce Larrabee, the Bow School Board Chair summed up the situation well:

There is a great article in the Concord Monitor today (Saturday), “As schools move online, many students haven’t followed.” It’s great in that it really puts in perspective what our school system is doing. After reading the article, I take great pride in the fact that it seems that the Bow School System is ahead of the pack – way ahead of the pack in online learning. True, it’s not as good as if the kids were in the schools, but I suspect our participation levels are extremely high, and with the kids ability to use their computers and the teachers ability to teach remotely – really haven’t missed a beat.

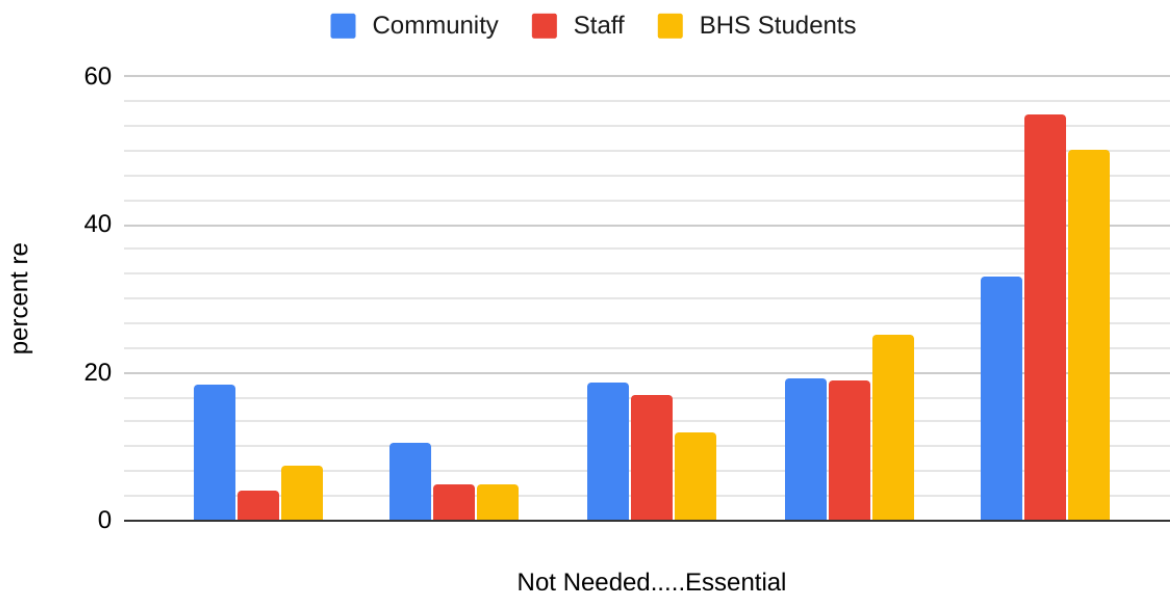
As a parent, I have continued to focus on the comparison between what Bow education used to be (live and in class) as opposed to what it is now (online), but considering Bow remote learning as opposed to the rest of the nation – that really have given me a new perspective – and a very positive one.

As Superintendent, I have always felt that the best and safest place for a student to be is in school. Academic, physical and social-emotional needs are addressed in our schools and classrooms. As you may know, I am slow to call a snow day and was not a big fan of “blizzard bags” as I feel even a day in late June at school is better than missing school or doing it remotely. Through this time of forced and extended Remote Instruction, I have moderated my stance slightly; and I do think Remote Learning could be used in small doses for school closures, but it still pales in comparison to physically being at school.

Another large issue with remote instruction is that it widens equity gaps. Most students who struggle with learning or motivation, have struggled more with Remote Learning. The need for intervention services and specialized instruction and services is growing during this time away from school. This is especially true as it is very hard to deliver these services remotely. Differences in student achievement are growing larger, and will have to be accounted for in planning for the future. This was highlighted for me by responses to the question about the need for the Wednesday Flex Days.

Wednesday Flex and Support Days have been....

Not needed (1) to Essential (5)



In the comments some felt that flex days were not needed and amounted to a day off that broke momentum for learning, while others saw them as an essential tool to catch up and get extra help. Similarly there were statements that students did not have enough work to do and had too much unstructured time, and others stated that students were overwhelmed with assignments. Many felt it was harder to motivate students to do extension work or activities related to themes, and keeping students engaged on Wednesday was more difficult.

Where we are going

The survey was sent out right after the Governor announced that schools would be doing Remote Learning through the end of the school year. It was also hinted that Remote Learning, with schools being closed, might continue through the summer and possibly affect the fall. With this in mind and with feedback gleaned from the survey; our administrative leadership team will begin focusing our planning for the close of this year, summer programming and how to transition to school year 20-21. Specifically we will focus on the following areas:

- Assessment, Grading and Reporting Progress

The top long term concern was on how students would be assessed, and for older students graded. Parents and students want to know if they are still meeting grade level benchmarks and if they will be ready to move on to the next level. The high school students especially are concerned about how grades will affect their transcripts and post-secondary plans. Many stated that they did not want grades to suffer due to remote instruction, while others stated that pass/fail is not fair to students who have worked hard during this time. We will be addressing this area in our planning and will take into consideration the comments and concerns.

- Year end events and closure for this year

A major concern from the survey was how to have graduation and recognize and honor our seniors. Move up days were also mentioned frequently especially for grades that will make building transitions (4-5 for BES, 6-7 for DES, 8-9 for BMS). Academic awards, senior class events, prom, drama and music performances, kindergarten screening and some sort of closure with classmates and teachers were also on people's minds.

To get a sense for planning, we asked about virtual options versus postponing events. By far the preference is to try to delay and have face to face events as much as possible. BHS is working on having the Winter Sports Awards remotely and feedback from that might help in our planning. We have a lot to think about as we move into May and beyond. How the state and country begin to open again will be part of our decision making process.

- Ending the school year early, and Summer School

Some commenters asked to end the school year early. Our staff will work their full contract year, but the end of May and early June might look very different for students than what we have been doing for Remote Instruction. As we get to the end of the school year, we will need time for focused assessment and reporting, having events or activities to wrap up this year, planning for transition to the next academic year and addressing remedial needs through summer school or interventions planned for the next school year. We will need to keep these in mind as we plan our end of year schooling.

Right now, the guidance from the state is to do parallel planning for summer school and Extended School Year for Special Education. It may be online or it could be face to face with small groups. I am particularly wary of planning remote learning for students who need remediation because of remote learning, but that is a possibility. We recognize that the need for remediation, skill development and competency recovery may be much larger this year.

There is also a budgetary consideration. We are saving some money with buildings being closed, but we will need to spend money for remediation, competency recovery and Compensatory Education and Services for identified students. Funds do not cross over the June 30 end of the fiscal year, so we will need to bridge two budgets to address these needs.

- Other issues to consider:
 - Special education and intervention services are particularly difficult to deliver in the Remote Learning environment and need more attention
 - We need to get materials back (or order replacements)
 - Student and staff may have materials still at school
 - Buildings need to be deep cleaned
 - Summer camps, including those in our buildings, may or may not happen

I will end this long update with these final thoughts. First, thank you! It has been incredibly hard and people have adapted to the best of their ability, and many have given service above and beyond. Second, we have miles to go before we sleep. There is a lot of planning and work still to do, and we must remain flexible and respond to the evolving situation. Third, your input is valuable, thoughtful and useful.

Two sayings keep echoing in my head: “None of us is as smart as all of us,” and “If you want to run fast, run alone. If you want to run far, run together.”

More information will be coming as we work this out together.

Dr. C

Superintendent of SAU 67