



Colleagues-

Summer is a time to relax and take time to do what you have been putting off while you have been educating the leaders of tomorrow. The weather has been ideal for enjoying the rays of sunshine but has limited the ability to sit pool side to cool off. I hope you find the time to do what makes you happy and energize. Remember to follow the guidelines that have been laid out by our health experts.

I am sending this to inform you of two vitally important things.

- 1. As the district begins to consider what school looks like next year, OEA is asking the key questions about student and staff safety. We are a part of a task force identifying what would need to happen in order to have in-person instruction for all students. Safety for all is the priority and we are consulting CDC guidelines, Douglas County Health Department recommendations, the NEA guidelines for re-opening schools, recommendations provided by the Nebraska Department of Education, and local public health experts in creating a plan that addresses the options come August. As soon as that plan is solidified, you will be notified. You have proven your dedication to make remote-learning successful for all and the district has begun the process of implementing the one-to-one initiative to allow students the opportunity to learn in blended and remote environments. TAKE NOTE: A survey was created by OPS for parents and staff seeking input on reopening in August. Please check your email and respond to the district.**
- 2. OEA was recently informed by the district of its desire to limit transitions between classrooms for secondary students, specifically those not on block schedules. The district desires to move all secondary schools to block scheduling. In the current situation, all OPS staff is dealing with a multitude of changes that require shifts in mindset, time management, and pedagogy. Additionally, many of us are engaged in discussions and actions at our schools to address racial injustice and inequity. The secondary schools with block schedules currently have several transitions a day and the proposal to move schools from periods to block barely affects a change unless major revisions of the block schedules are also enacted. Unless a plan to limit transitions substantially can be created that maintains adherence to other public health recommendations, we question this move. The OEA is concerned about a last-minute change in building schedules being hastily**

enacted. A change like this requires six or more months of planning for successful implementation. Forcing a fast change like this would bring additional concerns that would need to be addressed. The OEA has taken no action but has asked questions and has requested a mock schedule to evaluate how to maintain teacher plan time and acceptable and safe teaching and learning conditions.

The OEA has specific concerns with the quick implementation to block scheduling:

- OEA is in strong support of addressing whether this shift would have a net positive or negative impact on the safety of students and staff.
- This change would increase class sizes in buildings with large classes currently, often more than 30 students per class. This does not seem to move in the correct direction in terms of social distancing guidelines and smaller class sizes.
- Moving the large buildings from periods to block would demand an increase of teachers being assigned overages to make their current coursework available.
- There is a potential for a reduction in secondary plan time. We know that plan time is already an issue as we deal with increases in overage assignments and coverage during a subbing shortage, and that this may worsen in the near future due to the pandemic.
- The OEA believes drastic shifts in program and course offerings need to be made in collaboration with schools and community input.

We know from past practice, when these kinds of changes are made, they tend to become permanent. The voices of community members, students and teachers need to be included in how the proposed changes would impact immediate safety of students and teachers, as well as the long-term implications for programs, staffing and the teaching and learning conditions of students and teachers. We believe this is a cornerstone of public education.

OEA continues to advocate for the teachers and students during this new territory. Students' learning conditions are the teachers' working conditions and should be safe for all. Once I am aware of specifics, I will immediately share them with all of you. Trust that we are advocating and reach out via email. I am listening and will move forward concerns and ideas accordingly to identify the best path forward for everyone.

Be well,

Robert
OEA President
