



TO ALL THE TEACHERS, THANK YOU  
FOR CONTINUING TO TEACH OUR  
CHILDREN FROM AFAR DURING  
THE CORONAVIRUS!

The Omaha Education Association consists of 2800 members, each having their own personal opinions on how to meet the needs of their families and our students during this pandemic. Every voice is valuable and comes with great intent to make learning better and keep people safe during COVID-19. It is important to our association to hear the voice of every member as we work together to meet these unprecedented challenges.

We know that you are working the hardest you've ever had to work in your career. You have repeatedly changed course with little notice in order to provide the best quality and safest education possible for our students. As COVID-19 cases increase, Directed Health Measures are adjusted, plans are amended, and questions continue to be asked, we have been working not only with our own district leadership, but also with experts at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and staff at the Nebraska Department of Education to make sure that we have the most current information as we work to meet the needs of our members.

We are concerned about the physical and mental health of our students. There have been an increasing number of student suicides and calls to Child Protective Services due to the stress this disease and social isolation have had on our children. Many families are struggling to put food on the table even as evictions are rising. We know that being with compassionate, caring educators as well as having interaction with their peers are important components in keeping our students healthy.

We are also concerned about the health of each of you – our colleagues and members -- both from the physical effects of COVID-19 and its effect on adult mental health. We know that many of our members are experiencing secondary compassion fatigue, even as they struggle to balance their professional and personal lives.

Over the that last several months, OEA has worked tirelessly to address the issues brought to us by our members. Getting to the solution of any problem in a district our size takes time; there are policies that need to be followed and changing those policies often requires Board of Education action. I wish we could say that at a snap of a finger a decision can be made; however, every decision made has a ripple effect, and when done too quickly those ripples often create waves of additional problems to solve.

OEA has addressed the resolution of many issues with the district, including but not limited to:

- Length of Day (K-2) Notification of Positive Cases
- Technical Issues
- PPE
- SPED Case Load
- Specialist Concerns on "optional"
- FFCRA/Public Health Leave
- Lesson Planning
- OPS Staff ability to bring own kids to work
- Office Hours
- Notification of Positive cases
- Recording of Lesson
- Evaluation for Remote Setting
- ACT Coverage
- Device Distribution
- Sub/Buddy for TEAMS
- Classroom Sanitation
- FMLA Request
- Quarantine issues
- Resignations
- Class coverage

- Contact Tracers

OEA is working to address the teacher workload issue. We have asked the district to suspend Grade Level Meetings and TEAM meetings until second semester when we could reevaluate. This would allow staff to have the recurring plan time to use to prepare for instruction. OEA has also asked to have Pacing Guides lifted. The current Family 3:2 Model takes additional time and it is unrealistic to maintain the current Pacing Guide given the current instructional model.

We have also worked on limiting evaluations for non-probationary teachers this year. Though the NDE has granted permission to allow this to happen, it is in district policy and now that needs to be amended to allow the OPS evaluation process to change.

The Douglas COVID-19 dial is in red this week, and we have staff and students in isolation and quarantine (you can find the weekly update on the [OPS COVID-19 Dashboard](#)). When cases are identified the district must follow its guidelines and address cases at the building level; this may include moving to virtual learning for a period of time in designated hot spot buildings.

While the district is mandating safety protocols in our schools, we all must also do our best to reduce our own exposure in the community. I know this is especially difficult when we want to see family and celebrate special moments. We must always continue do our part for the safety of ourselves and others -- this includes wearing a mask, frequently washing hands, maintaining six feet of social distance, and avoiding crowded places and confined spaces.

COVID-19 will continue to affect our professional and personal lives for some time. OEA is working with and for you, seeking solutions to these complex issues as we advocate for a safe learning environment for students and safe working environment for our members. There are no perfect solutions and answers for everyone, but our answers will help more people when we work together.

OEA needs all members to provide input, WE are the OEA! You will be receiving two different surveys, one from the OEA negotiation team to seek input from you on what you see as our priorities for this round of negotiations and one from the NSEA. The data will be shared with the OEA. I urge you to fill out both surveys. Your voice matters to the OEA.

The work continues!

Be Well,

Robert  
OEA President

