

Spending any time on social media in the last month has likely meant that you've seen a barrage of COVID-19 memes and maxims. Some are the source of a much-needed reason to smile. Some are platitudes that don't seem helpful in our current reality.

NY Yankee great Yogi Berra is my favorite source of something that is a little of both... smile and cringe worthy at the same time.

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

In the past month, the district and the association together navigated the maze of guidance provided by multiple agencies to map out plans to help students, staff, and the greater community cope with our new normal. Every few days we found ourselves back at the table reworking our plan to meet new guidance. Public schools have experienced more than a few GPS recalibrations. To know where you're going, start with understanding where you're at.

As the COVID-19 story unfolds, the team here at the LWEA office has attempted to adhere to an "order of operations" (quick nod to my math teacher friends) when setting our priorities for discussions with the district. We've endeavored to ensure that our members basic needs for safety, security, and self-care are top-of-agenda items at weekly association-district leadership meetings.

The COVID outbreak reminds us how connected we are to one another. Governor Inslee's mandate to stay home reinforces the value of family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Our current reality underscores the importance of kindness, patience, and cooperation with each other as we attempt to navigate an uncertain future.

On Monday, that future came a little more into focus with OSPI Bulletin 024-20 which states, "although schools are closed and are not providing traditional in-person instruction, education must continue". Districts are now mandated to construct plans meeting several key objectives including "delivery of flexible instruction" and "checking for student learning". In short, simply offering enrichment activities is no longer adequate.

I readily admit that after reading what is being asked of us, a wave of anxiety passed over me. I'd received emails detailing members' challenges with childcare, elderly parents, recently unemployed partners and adult children, unique health concerns, and glitchy, sometimes wholly unreliable technology. How could we possibly deliver adequate instruction in the current environment?

On Tuesday, we received what I believe is very good news with the announcement that the District Board, in special session, had selected **Jon Holmen** as our new Superintendent. Although Jon was a finalist for another Superintendent position, I was relieved by the news that he had accepted the Board's offer. Jon is intimately familiar with district culture, values, and our interest-based discussion processes. When I reached out to offer my congratulations and discuss our shared values, I asked Jon to share his thinking on our partnership. He offered the following three points:

1. "I am continually impressed with the quality of the certificated and ESA staff that we attract and retain in Lake Washington. I have been in many classrooms and continue to see instruction that is high-quality. Our teaching staff have taken the charge to use instructional strategies that meet the needs of more students in the general education classroom. Our Special Services and Intervention staff develop curriculum and instruction that allows our students to increase learning and opportunities in the general education setting.
2. I look forward to continued collaboration with LWEA to improve outcomes for students. As our work becomes more complex, our level of collaboration needs to evolve to ensure we are all working towards the same outcomes for students.
3. In every position that I have held in Lake Washington School District, I have always felt that I was part of a team working towards the greater good for students. We have set high goals for ourselves and have a standard of excellence that we want each student to achieve. While the work of educating students has increased in complexity, I believe we have the team in place to continue providing excellent services to our students and families."

Forging ahead, the LWEA will continue to work in partnership with the district, jointly focused on creating a new normal that allows educators to learn and work in fulfilling ways that align with our values of equity, elevating educator voice in decision making, promoting professional growth. Consistency in uncertain times is valuable.

Howard Mawhinney – President

Lake Washington Education Association

