



Colorado Teachers of the Year

March 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues, District Leaders, and Board Members,

Thank you for your commitment to our students, families, educators, staff, administrators, and our communities. We appreciate all that you have been working on to ensure their educational, social, and emotional well being over the last two weeks.

While we face this unprecedented situation, we realize that your responsibilities are many, and your leadership is being tested as it has never been before. Thank you for working to meet the challenges as they are identified and continuing to remain flexible as they evolve. We realize that the landscape of education will inevitably be different as we move forward. While that can be scary, it also provides new opportunities to redefine the many ways that we educate and support our students and build systems in this new reality.

We would like to encourage you to engage your teachers at all levels in the conversations you are having about how to best pivot our systems for the students we serve. Teachers have already come together in their own virtual learning communities to discuss strategies and share resources. Many teachers across the state have training, expertise, and knowledge of what will be needed to effectively meet our students where they are, and can assist in this effort as we look to meet the needs of our community

We ask that you consider taking these steps as we collectively move forward:

1. Encourage your administration at every level of the district to engage with teachers and staff as decisions are being made during this time.
2. Conduct a survey and/or resource analysis of what skills, expertise, and knowledge your education staff currently has so that you can find and utilize the right resources to help guide our plans for both student instruction and other needs;
3. Create systems of educator support to ensure that teachers can reach out and collaborate with other teachers and professionals efficiently and proactively to find instructional and emotional support; teachers can, should, and are willing to help build this system.
4. Communicate the needs of each district clearly so that teachers can assist the district and their schools in ways they are best suited for;

5. Engage your current innovators early; many of them have been pushing on the system for years and may have great ideas about what pressure points and levers might be easiest or most effective to change, implement, utilize, and innovate for our future;
6. Think about innovative ways to support your educators and staff in connecting with students and parents during this time. The personal connections built this year are critical to maintain and to support our students during this tumultuous time. Creating support for parents to help students in building and maintaining healthy relationships, building self-esteem, engaging in ethical behaviors, and building curiosity are some great places to invest energy and time;
7. Harness the power of collective communication by assisting your educators in being in touch with the community and families in a positive and proactive way so that our families feel supported.
8. Create and maintain a communication system where all groups of school employees can collaborate for the well-being of our students, creating a comprehensive network of learning and support that is beyond certified and classified staff.

This is the time for us to come together and leverage our unique skills and talents to define and transform our systems in ways that expand access, build opportunities, create strong bridges to our communities, and engage educator passions and strengths in new ways. This is a chance to empower educators in our systems to come together and to lay strong, new foundations that we believe in and support from the ground up.

We encourage you to take this opportunity to harness the power and strength of teacher leaders in your district to model collaboration, innovation, and communication in action. Now is the time. We, and others, are willing to help.

Most Sincerely,

Colorado Teachers of the Year

Hilary Wimmer, 2020

Meg Cyprus, 2019

Christina Gillette Randle, 2018

Sean Wybrant, 2017

Leticia Guzman Ingram 2016

Elizabeth Miner 2014

Michelle Pearson, 2011

#UnitEd4Learning