



"THE DISTRICT"

Donna Independent School District

"THE DISTRICT"

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Eva C. Watts
President

Dr. Maricela Valdez
Vice-President

**Lieutenant Colonel (R)
Roberto Perez**
Secretary

Members

David De Los Rios
Valentin Guerrero
Dr. Donna Mery
Alicia Reyna

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Hafedh Azaiez
Superintendent

Dr. Anthony J. Sorola
Assistant Superintendent
for Human Resources

Dr. Debra A. Aceves
Assistant Superintendent
for Leadership

Velma Rangel
Assistant Superintendent
of District Operations

Rashad J. Rana
Assistant Superintendent
of Curriculum and
Instruction

Ludivina A. Cansino
Assistant Superintendent
of Business and Finance

Sept. 4, 2020

Hello Donna ISD Parents and Community Members,

As you are aware, our entire educational structure was disrupted last March due to the COVID-19 crisis. Like every school district around the world, Donna ISD was hit hard, but we overcame the obstacles that presented themselves and adapted to the situation.

As we look back, we are reminded of the sacrifices our teachers and staff made putting in long hours trying to figure out how to transition from a traditional teaching environment to educating our students virtually. We were incredibly proud of how quickly they adjusted and pushed forward.

This overwhelming experience opened our eyes to the district's strengths and challenges. As for our strengths, we saw our Donna ISD community uniting like never before. We saw their enthusiasm, dedication, and resilience when everyone worked together and supported each other. As for our challenges, we saw the digital gap and how widespread the problem was within our district. In a survey sent out to families, we learned that 52 percent of our students had no internet service and of the 48 percent who did, 12 percent had weak connectivity. We knew we had to act and do something fast.

So, we quickly began working behind the scenes and identified funding to invest in technology resources. Thanks to the support of our board members, we were able to purchase 12 communication towers to install across our district. The towers will provide free WiFi service to our students who live in areas where there is little or no internet service. Construction, which recently began, will be done in phases and hopefully completed in late October.

We also invested in one-to-one electronic devices for our students. We purchased iPads for our kinder through 2nd-grade students and Chromebooks for our 3rd through 12th-grade students. Most of the devices have arrived on time and have also recently been distributed. Students who haven't received one yet should be getting their device very soon.

We also invested in our teachers. They were all issued a new laptop and offered professional development with a focus on distance learning teaching. Just to give you an idea, they spent several days in the summer immersed in technology training where they learned about different platforms such as Seesaw, Screencastify, Keynote, and Google tools such as Google Docs and Google Classroom. Additional training will be available throughout the school year.

We also enhanced our curriculum by developing rigorous and engaging online instruction for all grade levels. We feel confident that our students will live up to our expectations and work hard to achieve their potential.

While these last few months have been focused on creating a solid and robust distance learning platform, we continue to prepare for when we eventually return to onsite instruction. Our district Task Force helped come up with a plan that resulted in a detailed “Learn and Lead Safely” document which was shared with our Donna ISD community this summer. The plan provides step-by-step instructions for online learning and a back to school in-person road map.

In closing, we want to thank each and every one of you for your patience, flexibility, and understanding as we get ready to begin the school year. Parents, we especially want to thank you for your continued support. You play a critical role in making sure our students stay focused in completing their assignments and remain in high spirits. Please know that we have a dedicated group of staff that is determined to provide your children with the best learning experience possible as we continue to evolve and meet their educational needs. We will have our ups and downs in this new way of schooling, but remember that we are THE DISTRICT and if we commit to being Bold and Brave...We will be Triumphant.