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Happy New Year DPS Families & Friends,

As I thought about what to include in this letter, I am overwhelmed with the incredible things our district, community, and country have fought to overcome this year. But what stood out is how much we achieved. In my years of education, I cannot name a time when educators faced such significant challenges. We went from trying to plan for a substantial increase in students in our buildings to preparing for 4,000 students to receive their education online. In less than a year, we have completely transformed education and what it looks like for our students.

Return to Full-Time Face-to-Face Learning

I know our families and community want to know when we will return to full-time face-to-face instruction. Our local health officials' guidance is to wait to see how the winter break impacts the community's Covid-19 cases. Thankfully, our current county cases remain very low. We are hopeful they will stay that way, leading to a return by mid-January. The Dickinson Public School Board will review the data at the January 11th school board meeting and decide the direction for instruction at that time. We will provide more information about the return process then.

We have asked our DPS team to start preparing for a full-time face-to-face return, and we are hopeful that we will finally be able to bring our students back to something that looks more normal for them. We will continue offering a distance-learning option. If this is something your family is interested in, please contact your child's school.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center

This year the district began working with a task force with members from Dickinson State University and Trinity Catholic Schools, state legislators, local government officials, and community stakeholders. Our goal is to create a regional CTE facility in Southwest North Dakota.

Currently, Southwest North Dakota does not have the educational opportunities that other parts of the state and country do. It is our dream to offer a state-of-the-art experience to every student regardless of their academic path. This dream has led to the purchase of the Halliburton complex by Dickinson Public Schools. We are working on ladder programming to allow students to receive various certifications and additional college credits before graduating high school.

It will provide students in our region with a chance to explore career paths, build their skillsets, and broaden their academic experiences before entering college or the workforce.



This facility will also provide capacity relief for our high school. However, we will still need to address the aging facility and the growing student population in our elementary schools in the near future.

Dickinson Public Schools' mission is *Success for All*, and we are eagerly working to meet that mission every day. As I close this letter, I want to sincerely thank our parents and guardians for all they have done to support our students and educators this year. The challenges thrust upon you have undoubtedly been difficult. To our DPS team, thank you. Thank you for being resilient, for adapting to every new hurdle thrown your way, and for always holding our students at the center of every decision.

2020 will be a year to remember; let's take the challenges and lessons given to us this year and apply them towards an unforgettable 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shon Hocker', written in a cursive style.

Shon Hocker, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Dickinson Public Schools