



MWA CEO Report for the MWA Board – May 2020

MWA CEO Report

Alton B. Nelson, Jr., MWA Chief Executive Officer

The Coronavirus Response by MWA has been proactive, responsive, and informed. The week of May 18th marks the 10th week of school closures. The following elements were addressed early and maintained:

- **Communication** to all stakeholders – students, parents, staff, and governance
- A **continuous learning plan**, utilizing distance learning strategies, was developed and implemented
- A **meal distribution system** was set up and implemented for MWA students and others in need
- **Psychological support providers** and deans adopted online tools to be responsive to the needs of students for virtual sessions and check-ins with families
- **Wi-Fi Hot-spots were ordered** to extend internet and online access to some students with little to no access
- **Operational systems were adapted** to monitor the campus and maintain a safe work environment for essential staff still working on campus on a limited but consistent basis (e.g. meal distribution)
- **Enrollment for 2020-21** continued with systems being adapted to accept some information online and others with safety protocols to follow in submitting paper forms on site
- **Summer programming plans** for high school credit recovery, middle school academic intervention were discussed and agreed upon

A **Family/Parent Survey** was administered to better understand the impact of COVID-19 and school closure on families. We will use this data to inform any adjustments to services, communication messaging, and programming.

- The family survey closed on 5/11/20 with 192 total responses (23% of MWA households)
 - Our goal for a response rate was 30% of MWA households
 - Angel can share out larger trends from the survey in a couple of weeks as part of the Board update emails.
- On a scale of 1-10, the majority of respondents are at about a “7.5” & a handful of them are at a “1”
- About half of respondents are saying the student work is too much & about half are saying it’s not enough
- Most respondents feel safe at home
- The majority of respondents have access to the internet
- Some respondents have stated the need for basic hygiene and cleaning supplies mental health support
- Good comments on meal service provided by MWA due to being jobless
- Most appreciate the level of communication through text and email
- A handful of families are expressing a lack of space for students to do work

Initial feedback from families tells me that some are experiencing hardships such as job loss, internet access challenges, and not enough space at home for their child to do work. And, they feel largely supported by MWA.

A **Staff Survey** was administered at the beginning of May. We received 97 responses (69%). Liz will share larger trends with the Board soon. The aim of the survey was is to better understand staff needs and well-being.

The **proposed charter revision** petition to request to be able to add 4th grade was pulled on May 5th. After consulting with Alicia, our CFO, Chief of Staff, and our Senior School Director, I made the decision to halt this process for now until more favorable conditions are in place that would support approval. Going through this process with a small chance of approval could hurt our chances later. This also allows us to utilize our current space to be maximized for social distancing. We would plan to bring this request back to our authorizer when the conditions are more favorable. Certainly, the economic impact on the local school district, WCCUSD, would have made it very difficult for the County Board to approve our material revision petition request, particularly given their current budget deficit.



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FY 2021 Budget Highlights

By March, we had worked on and arrived at a budget that we thought was about 90%-95% complete. COVID-19, projected losses to state revenue and losses in SRE funds meant that needed to identify some additional cost savings. Our CFO, worked with his team, myself, and budget managers to identify a little over \$2M in cost savings for the FY 2021 budget, along with about \$1M in savings to close the FY 2020 school year. We made cuts through a combination of hiring freezes, job eliminations, combining positions, and cutting some non-personnel expenses. In addition, we are seeking relief through the following tools:

- **Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan** – We were approved for about \$2.4M loan with the chance that all or a portion of it could be forgiven. It provides needed cash flow relief as public funding is already being projected to be reduced as much as 10%-15% as well as starting payment deferrals as soon as June.
- **Teleconnect Fund** – This fund will help to pay for internet access for families without it. This funding would, for example, help to pay for up to 50% of the Wi-Fi Hotspots we ordered for families without access (about 15%). We are awaiting the application to be processed. It could represent about \$15K-\$20K in support.
- **Hot-Spot Service Funding Support** – Through one of the COVID-related programs available, our Managing Director of IT was able to secure 3 months of free service.

Talent

Recruiting is continuing, virtually, in full swing. The Talent Team has been filling open roles for staff and faculty. In addition to making offers to three new TFA Corps Members and three Teacher Residents (2 of the 3 are CAP Alumni), we are excited that we have some strong internal candidates to fill important new leadership roles. Please see their detailed report that is part of the Board Packet.

Q4 Goals for 2019-20 (APR-JUN)

1. Assess summer and fall programming and operational readiness by June 30, 2020.
2. Prepare for the launch of the updated MW Strategic Plan by early July 2020.

General Observations

- MWA leadership is largely rising to the occasion under unprecedented times.
- The communication and collaboration that is required is helpful in strengthening teamwork and capacity.
- Students and staff experience a mix of feelings (loss, depression, and anxiety) of not having “normal” school.
- Community building online is helpful but also not quite as adequate.
- Challenges of working from home for staff include childcare, supporting their children with school work, adequate space at home for everyone to work, and a sense of loss of not being around colleagues.
- Most have appreciated the level of communication and transparency.
- Sense of helplessness at not knowing how to better support students who are less motivated to engage online work and whose parents are not quite sure what to do either.
- Some general anxiety of not knowing what is coming next. Despite ongoing communication, we are not able to reassure staff and families as well without more definitive information and timeline.
- We were well-positioned to continue learning and grading assignments soon after schools closed, putting us safely in the top 10%-20% of schools. Given our responsiveness in serving families academically, social-emotionally, technologically, and providing meals, I would put us in the top 1%-5% of schools.
- The inequity in school funding and resource allocation among communities in California means that students will be impacted for years to come on an even wider continuum of educational inequity than currently exists.
- The state has tried to be both supportive and flexible given the disparities in resources.