

Bennett School District Reaches Out To Serve Students During Pandemic

Known as the small school with a big heart, the Bennett school district has stepped up to help students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Principal Jeremiah Costello described the Bennett staff as “crazy fantastic” in their efforts to meet the needs of all students in the eastern Cedar county district.

With school out since March 17, Costello said it was determined almost immediately that there would be regular communication with all students and their families, and an effort would be undertaken to make sure all low income families were provided with food.

The district adopted a delivery model because staff knew that there were many families with only one vehicle and at least one parent working.

While other districts have successfully used a pickup service for getting meals to district residents, Costello said the Bennett delivery service has worked well, bringing weekly contact with students (while also socially distancing). The delivery service requires a signed waiver for free and reduced price meals.

Parents, bus drivers and the guidance counselor have delivered food. When food is dropped off staff check on the emotional wellbeing of the students, who range from Pre K to sixth grade.

The Bennett district is delivering 36 meals and for the first four weeks they made those deliveries on a daily basis. The last two weeks that has been reduced to twice a week. For the Friday delivery they team up with the Backpack Buddies program to provide food for the weekend.

Costello calls the delivery method “a go to them approach to lessen the burden in any way we can.”

For the delivery of instruction, the district takes students a printed packet every Tuesday with material for voluntary learning. Teacher Bobbi Havill has helped prepare all of the packets each week and they go out with the Tuesday

food delivery.

For younger students in the Pre K to third grade there is a minimum of one contact a week, but often more, with some video lessons and Google Meets.

Students in grade four through six are using Google Meets and Google Classroom, with a lot of virtual video links.

The district worked closely with F and B Communications to make sure students has access to the internet and it has also provided some devices for students to use. Every family in the district was contacted early on to see what the device needs were for each student.

Google Meets is used three times a week for math and reading and twice for science and social studies. Art, music and physical education are handled with supplemental material and videos.

“We are really don’t want out students to miss out,” Costello said. “We are trying to engage and reach out families.”

“I also want to give a shout out to our staff. We hit the ground running and they stepped out of their comfort zone to provide for our students. Teachers have set up websites and we have done things that were not anticipated.”

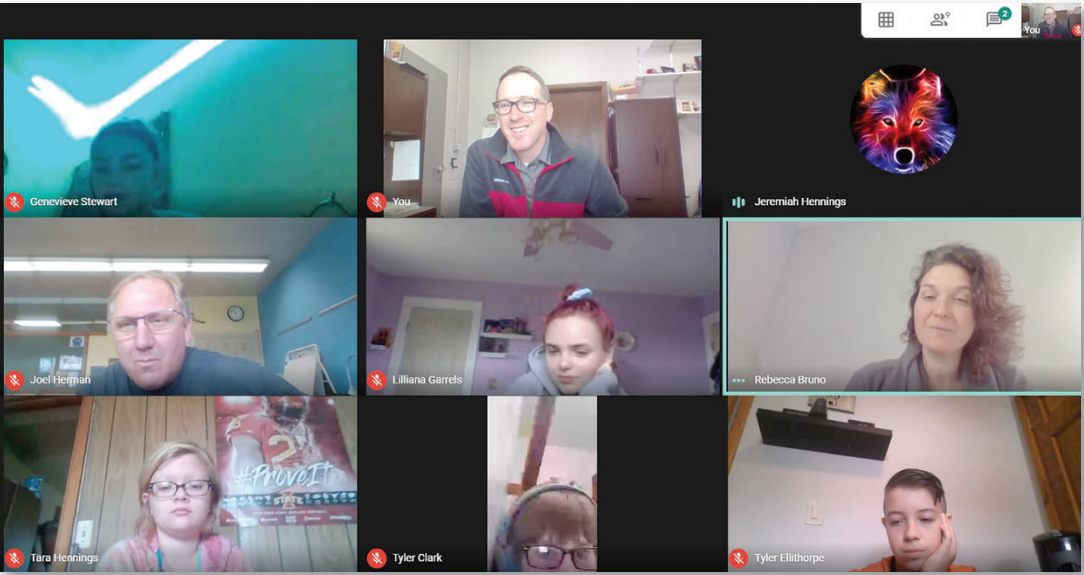
The district also holds virtual staff meetings and training is ongoing for Level I Google Educator certification, which requires 13 hours to complete.

Overall Costello said the community has been very receptive to the efforts made by the school and very appreciative of the food and educational packet delivery.

Staff recently made a video telling the students how much they missed them.

Costello jokingly described the overall effort as providing a private education to students at a public price.

The next piece of the puzzle will be for staff to try to prepare for the coming fall, without knowing what is going to happen.



6th Odyssey class



Bobbi Havill assembled packets for weekly delivery.



The sign in front of the Bennett school says ‘Students We Miss You!!!’



Teresa Wulf and Diane Covington preparing food.



Ms. Mackey recording a virtual lesson for preschoolers.



Joel Herman delivering meals.

ABSENTEE VOTING FROM P9

form directly from the Iowa Secretary of State website, [VoterReady.Iowa.gov](https://www.sos.iowa.gov/voterready). Requests must be received by the county auditor’s office by 5 p.m. Friday, May 22.

Primary elections are intended for members of the Republican and Democratic parties only. No Party voters who choose to request a party’s ballot will have their voter registration officially changed to that political party.

Secretary Pate expanded the absentee voting period for mailed ballots in the June primary to 40 days due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The in-person absentee voting period begins Monday, May 4.

For more information about the June 2 primary, visit [VoterReady.Iowa.gov](https://www.sos.iowa.gov/voterready).

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