

Good afternoon, Madame Chair, committee members my name is Jeanne Fox. I am an Educational Support Professional (ESP) in the Osseo Area School District for the past 14 years. I am an EL (English Language Learner) ESP at Park Center Senior High School and IB World School in Brooklyn Park and Kidstop ESP at Basswood Elementary in Maple Grove.

As an experienced ESP, I have known how essential my position, as an hourly employee, is in supporting student learning. In this new reality, it is even more critical to continue supporting students not only academically, but socially, emotionally in these uncertain times for students.

In my role as an ESP in the emergency childcare facilities, my daily routine with students has changed dramatically. I am working with students and staff to ensure that facilities are using the recommended safety practices. Which includes continually keeping surfaces sanitized, ensuring that students keep social distancing and practicing handwashing every time a student transitions. Programming has been set up to reflect a more normal academic school day. During what would be typical school hours, I assist with assigned school work. This includes assisting students with iPads, computers or Chromebooks so that they can attend their “virtual” class with their teacher and classmates. For some students it includes assisting them with completing packets. Support is provided to students so that they have the opportunity to complete their school work during the day at the emergency childcare facility.

In my role as an EL ESP, working with high school students, my days have shifted from a 7:30-2:00 school day, to anywhere from 7:30am to 10:00pm to meet the needs of students. I am assisting high school students with their academic needs, through virtual study hall meets. This includes active academic support to assist students with language barriers and to provide clarity on academic expectations that have been previously taught by licensed staff. Not only are we supporting students academically, but socially, emotionally as well. In these “meets” students are able to see familiar faces and talk to us which helps create a sense of security for them and consistency in their day. Many students are struggling with this new normal and want to express their feelings with someone they trust. We now are able to have regular meetings with licensed staff, through virtual means, to collaborate on programming for students. This new reality has created the need to collaborate like we have never before.

We have been asked to do new things, learn new things and provide support in a whole new way.

As we have seen, hourly employees play a vital role in supporting our students and families. By not continuing to pay hourly employees, there will be a significant impact on employees, students and families. Often times, we are the life-line for students. We are the first ones they have contact with in the morning, we support them throughout the day and are often the last one they see before they go home. Licensed staff could not possibly have the time to follow-up with all of these students, without the support of hourly employees, who often are the staff who have the connection with students. Without staff who have a connection with students, I am concerned that these students will slip through the cracks.

Thank you committee members for the opportunity to share my experiences today.