Tribal Government Responds to Student Support Survey During Pandemic

In June, Nooksack Administration released a survey asking for feedback from parents on ways in which the government could support students at home during the pandemic. Since release of the survey, the General Manager and Nooksack Pandemic Response Team have coordinated with departments to make sure families’ concerns are being heard. Below is how the government has listened and responded to parents:

1. Several parents commented on the need for laptops or other devices for children at home. Most school-issued devices were returned at the end of the school year. Families expressed the need for online access to education, tutoring, youth programming, and health resources. On June, 16, 2020 Tribal Council approved the School-Aged Chromebook Assistance Program. Nooksack leadership worked with the IT Department to acquire Chromebooks as part of the needs-based program. Distribution to commence soon.

2. Similarly, parents expressed the need for tutoring for their children while at home. Overall, many students struggled to maintain learning goals at the end of the 2019-2020 school year due to school closures. The Education Department is working to secure a new contract teacher to assist with online home learning in response to the need.

3. Listening to parents, the Education Department shifted its Youth Program to online learning by sharing activities, resources, and links. The Youth Program has distributed school supplies, planners, notebooks, pencils, art and craft supplies, and snacks through its weekly BOXX Program. The Nooksack Library launched the Summer Reading Challenge and Learning Log for students to track both reading and online learning activities for incentives.

4. With the disruption of school closures, parents requested ways to celebrate graduates. The Education Department offered banners for graduates, and a drive-through celebration occurred for 5th and 6th graders moving up to middle school and junior high. A high school and college graduate celebration is planned for later this month. Keith Lindsey of the Education Department stepped in to offer high quality graduate portraits at no cost to families.

5. Parents also expressed concerns about mental wellbeing of their kids. Nooksack Behavior Health, in coordination with the Education Department, began remote weekly groups with the opportunity for youth to earn incentives. Program directors also wrote encouraging letters to all kids in the Youth Program. Mailing to occur soon.

6. Parents requested sanitization supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Household packages are currently being assembled to meet this need.

Ongoing services:

In the fall, family will still be able to purchase clothes and other necessary back-to-school items with the annual Nooksack School distribution (not Council approved yet), even if the 2020-2021 school year looks different than prior years.

Parents concerned with childcare may contact Alicia Allard, the director of the Child Development, or the Social Services Department for additional resources. Find updated information on our website.

Families who require additional emergency funds for food have resources at the Nooksack Food Bank, and Social Services offers food vouchers in the form of grocery gift cards for those in need. If your student is on free or reduced school lunch plans, your family qualifies for additional EBT pandemic benefits. ###