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SPORTS: Mustangs fall season begins PAGE 10

Back To School Filling the Learning Gap

It's that time of year when students are heading back to school. Press Publications asked four school districts, including the Mounds View School District, about challenges in learning gaps among students in their district and how schools plan to respond to these challenges during the 2021-22 school year.



Austin Dircks hoists his bike over his head after he reached his destination at the Mexican border all the way from the Canadian border.

California dreaming: Local man bikes the Pacific coast

BY NOELLE OLSON
STAFF WRITER

Austin Dircks has loved biking since he was a kid. This summer, he turned his dream of biking across the country into reality. Reaching top speeds of 41 mph, 27 year old Dircks, of Shoreview, biked 94 miles a day for 19 days on a solo trip through the states of Washington, Oregon and California.

"I have watched the Tour de France since I was 7 or 8, and I learned about long-distance bike riding. I found this specific route from Canada to Mexico along the Pacific coast many years ago. As I got in more shape over the years, I thought, 'I could do this,'" Dircks said. "I set my schedule to do it last summer, but with COVID and nothing open, I delayed it for this summer, and it worked out perfectly."

He started his trek in Blaine, Washington at the Canadian border on his titanium Lite Speed bike. He rode south through the states of Washington, Oregon and California and ended up in Tijuana at the Mexican border.

"I wanted to go solo because I didn't want anyone to wait for me or for me to wait for anyone else," he said.

Throughout the trip, Dircks camped or stayed at hotels. He also found places to stay by couch surfing on an app called Warm Showers.

"People offer up floor space, couch space, a place in their yard to throw a tent, or whatever



Angie Peschel, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

an Educational Benefits form because they may qualify for other benefits like free or reduced rates on fees for school activities, transportation, home internet, academic tests and college applications.

Responses submitted by Angie Peschel, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

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SEE CALIFORNIA DREAMING PAGE 15

Mounds View Public Schools

Q. With the challenges of teaching last year during a pandemic, some are reporting learning gaps of 30% or more in math and possibly other subjects. Do you anticipate learning gaps among students? If so, how will your schools know which students need additional instruction and which students do not?

A. Last year was certainly a challenging one for students, parents and teachers, but we're proud of the efforts everyone made, and we're confident learning was still happening in our schools.

We use multiple data points including conversations with students and parents to meet our students where they are, and we personalize

instruction to help them make growth in their learning.

Q. Is your school district making any curriculum changes as a result?

A. Our curriculum is based on state standards so there are no curricular changes planned at this point. We will continue to support students where they are in their learning and make adjustments as needed.

Q. What advice do you have for students or parents to fill in any gaps and make the most of the new school year?

A. Communicate with your child's teacher and partner with them to help make the most of the school year.

Q. Do you anticipate any changes in Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, or MCA tests this year?

A. We are unaware of any anticipated changes for the Minnesota

Comprehensive Assessments in spring 2022.

Q. Do you anticipate colleges and universities returning to using college entrance exams in the coming year?

A. As usual, we will continue to provide all juniors the opportunity to take the ACT at their high school for free this spring as we monitor what local colleges and universities are deciding to do in regards to using college entrance exams. Our students and families are welcomed to contact their dean or the post-secondary coordinator with any questions.

Q. What is new this year at your schools you'd like the community to know?

A. Meals are free for all students, thanks to federal funding. Even so, we're asking families to complete

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