



March 16, 2020

Prairie Families:

Yesterday evening, Governor Reynolds [recommended](#) a 4-week closure of Iowa schools to combat the spread of COVID-19.

This letter is to inform you that College Community Schools will be following this recommendation and shutting down school operations for four weeks. For CCSD, this means the 3 weeks after we were scheduled to return from spring break. **Under this action, students will not be returning to school until Monday, April 13.** I also want to overview our plan to communicate further on this matter as our ability to finalize and release our plan is contingent on several state-level matters.

Until yesterday, the governor's recommendation was NOT to close school. However, our CCSD team has been working on contingency plans for possible closure for over a week. The logistics, feasibility, and legal authority to take action on all elements of this plan are still uncertain. Therefore, we cannot finalize plans until mid-week.

Today, lawmakers are meeting to discuss the items. We need answers to these questions before we can finalize and communicate our full plan:

- 1) Will school districts be required to make up these days?
- 2) What can learning opportunities look like during school closure?
- 3) Can we continue food service in some way? (CCSD has applied for a waiver to provide meals to students during this closure and the approval is pending)
- 4) What are the options for employees to be compensated during school closure?

While spring break gives us more time than we would normally have, we know that our staff and families want and need information as soon as possible. This shutdown will impact every aspect of our community and the lives of our families, including, but not limited to childcare, meal planning, and educational interruption. There is not one sector or individual in our community that will not be impacted in some way.

We are working as quickly as possible to finalize plans. In addition to working with our school teams, schools throughout the region are working together to generate effective responses to this shutdown.

Here is a quick summary of what we can determine at the moment:

- 1) All CCSD schools will remain closed to students and the public (including community use and rentals) until Monday, April 13.
- 2) We will continue to keep ECC daycare and school-age services open by observing CDC recommendations unless closure is directed by the department of health.
- 3) We will continue the restrictions put in place during spring break until April 13 related to practices and activities. [Spring Break Letter](#)

- 4) The unions representing our state's extracurricular activities released a [joint message](#) that they will also honor the governor's recommendation and suspend competition and practice until April 13.
- 5) Since this situation evolves hourly, we cannot at this time make or finalize plans for activities occurring after the April 13th return to school. This includes yearly events such as prom and graduation. We will continue to monitor recommendations from public health that may impact these events.

Our goal is to release our full plan related to the 4-week shutdown as soon as possible, with a goal of communicating additional details to staff and families by midweek this week. First, we must have answers from our legislature, legal counsel, and the governor to important questions that will significantly impact our plan. All area schools are in the same situation and we continue to work together to expedite these answers and our planning processes.

We also need your help. Here is how you can help to make this school closure effective in decreasing the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are based on guidance from Linn County Public Health, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

CONSIDERATIONS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE:

- When making arrangements for childcare, take into account that grandparents may be in high-risk categories related to age and/or underlying health conditions.
- Students should avoid social gatherings in their homes or in public during the duration of this school closure.
- Students should stay home when ill.

GENERAL PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

1. All people with flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath should stay home from work, public spaces, and social gatherings to prevent others from getting ill.
2. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away immediately after you use it. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inside elbow area.
3. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
4. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
5. Avoid travel and large gatherings in the coming weeks.
6. Please remember that people with underlying health conditions are at greater risk.

Trusted resources for additional information about COVID-19 and Coronavirus are available here:

- [Iowa Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

In Service,

Doug Wheeler, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools