

March 19, 2020



Prairie Families,

First and foremost, thank you for your patience as we work through the uncharted territory of temporary school closure and this national pandemic. Our students and families are in our thoughts and at the center of our actions during this time. Our district office team has been working to gather, filter, and interpret the guidance we are given related to this closure to determine our scope of available options to create action plans for staff upon the completion of spring break.

The condition of this national health emergency, as well as guidance to schools, changes hourly. We want to provide you with guidance and reassurance as we move forward. I have full faith in our ability as a school district, in collaboration with you, to be an asset in our community's response and recovery efforts. We are looking forward to returning to a normal school routine and have confidence that our collective effort during this school closure will allow us to return to school on April 13th.

Our response requires us to take quick action once we receive guidance. In this crisis, we need to act quickly, accurately, and in compliance with guidance from the Iowa Department of Education, public health agencies, and other state agencies. These entities are also in uncharted water and doing their best to support us. Please be patient and supportive of our local and state agencies. They are also working hard to respond to this unprecedented crisis. I have been pleased and proud of these agencies in their response. They are truly putting forward their best efforts.

Based on this developing situation, our district has identified three priorities to assist our students and the greater community during this crisis. These priorities will guide us during this school closure.

1. **Support our students, families, staff, and our greater community through this crisis.**

- **We will be providing breakfast and lunch to any child 18 years or under starting Tuesday, March 24.**
 - We are currently trying to assess how many children we need to prepare for. Please complete [this link](#) to help us plan for need.
 - Any child who comes will be fed.
 - Lunch and breakfast will be packaged together and will be picked up at one time.
 - We very much want to provide multiple sites across all of our communities but are limited to those which the federal government will approve. At this time, meals will be distributed from 10:30 - 1:00 at these locations:
 - Prairie Hill Elementary
 - 20 Miller Avenue, near the intersection of Kirkwood Boulevard and Miller Avenue
 - Gateway Gardens Apartments, 2981 Sixth Street SW, Cedar Rapids
 - Grant Elementary in the Cedar Rapids School District, 254 Outlook Drive SW (Near Cedar Valley/J Street Apartments)
 - Hoover Elementary in the Cedar Rapids School District, 4141 Johnson Avenue NW
 - If you cannot reach one of the sites above due to transportation issues, please call 319.848.5337 to speak with someone or leave a voicemail message. We will do our best to provide new sites.
 - Ongoing communication regarding meal sites will be shared via social media.
- Our employees will be staying in communication with your children and you to provide voluntary learning activities, provide guidance to you to support your children's academic learning, as well as check in with you to support social-emotional needs and mental health at various times during this closure. You can expect emails and phone calls toward the end of next week to allow staff time to develop these opportunities early in the week.
- Copies of learning activities will be available for distribution by grade level at meal delivery sites as soon as these materials are available.
- There are a lot of resources available online to help parents navigate conversations about this pandemic with their children. [Here is a link](#) to one brief resource. If you need additional guidance, please email your child's school counselor.
- Additional information on the pandemic response at the state, national, and international levels is available here:
 - [Iowa Department of Public Health](#)

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

2. **Follow the guidance of health officials to do our part as an organization in preventing the spread of COVID-19.**

We continue to follow the latest guidance from public health agencies related to strategies to stop the spread of COVID-19. Entrance to our schools is highly restricted. Our buildings and outdoor campus spaces are closed to the public. Our custodians are deeply cleaning all buildings. All on-campus and off-campus activities are canceled for the duration of the closure.

3. **Operation of childcare facilities.** The Governor has been consistent in her message that childcare services are a significant part of recovery. This need is especially impactful to those deemed “essential” to recovery and daily operations. Therefore, the Early Childhood Center (ECC) remains open and staff members are taking extra steps in health screening of employees and children, significantly enhancing cleaning procedures, restricting access to the building, and taking additional steps aligned with public health guidance. These measures allow ECC to stay open so that we may provide this vital function for our community. According to guidance from public health officials, the risk of not having these facilities operate outweighs the risk of having them open. Closure of our daycare program would significantly impact those members of our community who are at the forefront of the response and recovery efforts. We will continue to partner with Linn County Public Health (LCPH) and the Linn County Department of Human Services (DHS) as needs for childcare in our area develop.

We will weather this storm together as a school community. We are committed to be a part of the prevention, response, and recovery efforts. Thank you in advance for your support and sacrifice during this difficult time.

In closure, allow me to sincerely thank all of you for your support of your children, your neighbors, and our staff. Thank you to our local public health employees, health care workers, daycare providers, emergency services personnel, law enforcement, and all others who are working together to maintain the safety and health of our community. We will get through this together. **WE ARE PRAIRIE.**

In Service,

Doug Wheeler, PhD
Superintendent of Schools