



EDMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing society

March 16, 2020

Dear EPS Families and Staff,

At 4:30 Monday, March 16, the Oklahoma State Board of Education authorized the closure of all Oklahoma public schools beginning March 17 and lasting until April 6 to give students and staff a period of time to be protected from further community spread of the COVID-19 virus. This includes the cessation of all instruction, grading, tutoring, private lessons, extra-curricular activities including tryouts, staff development, and parent/teacher conferences. As of this writing, state testing has not been canceled. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister stated during an emergency meeting of the State Board of Education earlier today that there is “flexibility” about when state testing could be held.

We understand that this closure has a significant impact on our families and staff and presents numerous hurdles. Tomorrow, Superintendent Hofmeister will have a conference call with all state Superintendents. In addition, Edmond district administrators will meet to further develop plans to follow the guidelines as determined by the State Board of Education. Among the numerous issues to be considered are instructional days, essential employees, staff compensation, graduation, and the continuation of free and reduced-price meals for students. Many items will need our attention going forward but we are committed to doing everything we can to ease the burden on families and staff during this unprecedented closure. Please be on the lookout for more detailed communication tomorrow about how the school closure will affect staff and students.

If you have not done so already, now is the time to sign up to receive text messages from our district. Text messaging, which has primarily been used for emergency communication, allows us to send real-time information on this rapidly evolving health crisis. You can participate in this free service by sending a text message of “Opt in” (no hyphen) to our schools’ shortcode number of 67587. Go [here](#) for more details. You can also opt-out of these messages at any time by simply replying to one of our messages with “Stop.”

As Superintendent Hofmeister stated earlier today, these are “challenging” times for families and the decision to close public schools statewide was not a “simple one.” However, I agree with her declaration that at this time in history, learning must be secondary to student, staff and community health concerns.

Thank you for your understanding and for partnering with us as we take the necessary steps to protect our school communities.

Respectfully,

Bret Towne

Superintendent

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