



EDMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing society

March 19, 2020

Dear EPS Families,

This letter is intended to provide updated guidance on our school closure through April 3 and to answer specific questions that have been sent to the designated Covid19@edmondschools.net email address.

At this time please review the following key points:

School Sites: Due to social distancing guidelines and limited available staff, we have made some modifications and changes to our scheduled campus reopenings on Monday and Tuesday, March 23 and 24. As I stated in an email earlier this week, between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm on these two days, individuals may retrieve essential items ONLY from schools, including medicine, eyeglasses, and musical instruments. Please be advised that we will be limiting building access to small groups. Staff will either check you in as you enter the building or deliver your item to you in your car (elementary only). Please follow the signs at each site for more specific information. PLEASE do not come to the schools if you do not have to. When retrieving your items, enter through the front entrance and go directly to the place they are stored (locker, music room, etc.), retrieve the items, and exit the building quickly. Practice social distancing and do not gather with other students, parents, or teachers during this time!

Online Learning: We have received numerous emails about the district's ability to provide online learning during school closure. While EPS does have the capability to provide online learning, especially in the secondary, there are two major hold-ups. First, the State Department of Education has declared that before a school can convert to online learning, they have to ensure that every student has access to the internet. While we have devices for all of our secondary students, we cannot guarantee that every student has access to the internet. This would take some time and funding to provide a district hotspot for any student without internet service at home. Second, ensuring teachers receive the training necessary to conduct robust, online classes in a week's time is not practical. The district took two years to make the conversion from a traditional classroom to a blended classroom with every student having a device. A blended approach is where some instruction takes place in the classroom, and some instruction is provided through the device. Online learning takes a completely different pedagogical approach, one our teachers are not fully trained to carry out at this time. We are all concerned about how learning will progress in the weeks to come. Our curriculum team will begin working as soon as they get back from spring break to help the district provide for our students' educational resources to the best of our current ability.

Advanced Placement Tests: At this time, the College Board is in the process of developing resources to continue learning and looking at different testing options. Please note that our direction from the State Department of Education was to cease instruction and grading during the school closure. We will have to work to find a balance between these two governing bodies. For the most up-to-date information, please go to <https://pages.collegeboard.org/collegeboard-covid-19-updates>. Although not required, some district AP teachers may reach out to your student to provide optional resources.

Testing: State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister announced Thursday, March 18, that the State Department of Education plans to pursue a federal waiver to suspend statewide student assessments for the 2019-20 school year. Hofmeister said, “Our educators and district leaders need to shift their focus from assessments to essential services, including child nutrition and planning to continue student learning through alternative delivery methods. Their priority cannot be with assessments that would be of questionable validity in the wake of a global pandemic. Assessments are very important tools, but they do not outweigh other considerations during this time of uncertainty.” The U.S. Department of Education has indicated it would consider waiver requests from states with widespread closures related to the spread of COVID-19. The waiver request will also seek suspension of the Oklahoma School Report Card for the current school year.

Student Resources: A school closure does not have to mean a regression in academic skills. Once our curriculum staff returns from spring break, we will begin creating a parent dashboard of educational resources for all grades PK-12 with information for specific content areas. Be looking for more information on this in the future.

Graduation: At this point, the district is scheduled to be closed through April 3, returning on April 6. If that situation holds, while classes would resume in early April, the district still may not be able to hold large group gatherings such as a graduation ceremony. If the state Department of Education extends the school closure past April 6, it is possible that instruction would continue in a different format or that grades would be frozen where they are and credits based on what has been earned to this point. In this case, seniors who have earned their credits to this point would receive a diploma and graduate. Keep in mind these are hypothetical situations at this point. It’s difficult to know for sure how this will play out at this time because it is an ever-changing situation.

Concurrent Coursework: If your high school student is taking a concurrent class through a local university, please contact the university directly with any questions you may have about the completion of the course.

Proms: The venues contracted to hold our high school proms have canceled due to emergency declarations requiring them to limit large group gatherings. We are hopeful that proms can be rescheduled, but that will depend on the containment of Covid19, which in turn affects large group gatherings. At this point, we cannot predict the likelihood of rescheduled proms.

Meals for Students (UPDATED): Beginning Monday, March 23, Edmond Public Schools will provide free meals at seven locations to any child 18 and under regardless of whether they qualify for free and reduced-price meals or what school they attend. Children must pick up their meals in person or drive-thru (Ida Freeman and Sunset only) at the following locations at the following times:

- Ida Freeman Elementary School (12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.)
- Sunset Elementary School (12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.)
- Reed's Landing Apts (10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.)
- Uni-City Mobile Home Park (11:30 a.m. to Noon)
- Lamplighter Mobile Village (10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.)
- Coffee Creek Apts (11:30 a.m. to Noon)
- Windrush Apts (12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

Edmond Schools is limited in the area we can deliver meals due to federal guidelines. We are currently approaching local churches to assist in providing meals to children in the southwest corner, central, and north-central areas of the district. The Regional Food Bank is also planning on continuing its backpack program. We will communicate the details once they become known.

Special Education: School personnel will be reaching out to the parent/guardian whose child's IEP or 504 is due during the mandatory shutdown. Please know that parent/guardian participation at meetings via alternate means, including telephone or videoconference, are allowable under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 34 CFR § 300.322. If this type of meeting format is not possible, or you would prefer to meet in person, then please work with the school personnel to schedule the meeting as soon as school resumes. Evaluations that require face-to-face interaction for special education or 504 eligibility will be delayed until school is back in session. The School Psychologist and/or other related service personnel will contact parents/guardians of children who are not school age to schedule a new appointment date and time once school resumes. After school resumes, IEP/504 teams will determine on an individual basis the need for additional or extended school year (ESY) services to make up the missed IEP/504 services. Even though no instruction is allowed during the mandatory shutdown, our staff will be working to provide some resources on the district's website for families of children with disabilities. These will be posted soon.

While I know the uncertainty surrounding this school closure can cause anxiety and fear, it is imperative that we take this cessation seriously for the health and safety of all Oklahomans. Please rest assured that Edmond is doing everything possible to ensure the needs of students and employees will be met during this challenging time. Our community is resilient, and we will get through this together.

Respectfully,

Bret Towne

Superintendent of Schools

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