

Thomas S. Bruce, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SJPS Families, please read this press release AND important District information following.

Governor Whitmer Announces Statewide Closure of All K-12 School Buildings

School building closures will last Monday, March 16 through Sunday, April 5

LANSING, Mich. -- March 12, 2020 Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that in order to slow the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Michigan, she is ordering the closure of all K-12 school buildings, public, private, and boarding, to students starting Monday, March 16 until Sunday, April 5. School buildings are scheduled to reopen on Monday, April 6.

As of tonight, the number of presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Michigan is 12.

“This is a necessary step to protect our kids, our families, and our overall public health,” said **Governor Whitmer**. “I am working with partners across state government to ensure educators, parents, and students have the support they need during this time, and to ensure our children who rely on school for meals have access to food. I know this will be a tough time, but we’re doing this to keep the most people we can safe. I urge everyone to make smart choices during this time and to do everything they can to protect themselves and their families.”

“Closing our K-12 school buildings is the responsible choice that will minimize the risk of exposure for children, educators, and families and mitigate the spread of coronavirus,” said Michigan State **Superintendent Michael Rice**. “The Department of Education will continue to work closely with our partners in state government to help our students and educators in each school district get through this time. This is about protecting the most people in Michigan.”

What this means for St. Joseph Public School Families:

School building closures will last Monday, March 16th through Sunday, April 12th

Over the past weeks, area superintendents have collaborated to develop plans in the event that a closure of schools would be determined to be the best measure to slow the spread of COVID-19. It goes without saying that we had hoped that we never had to initiate school closures due to communicable illness.

The determination to close schools across the State of Michigan was made by Governor Whitmer last evening, March 12, 2020 during an 11:00 p.m. news conference. In an effort to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Governor has called for the closing of schools across the state starting Monday, March 16th. For St. Joseph Public Schools, the Governor’s timeline ends as our spring break begins. SJPS is planning to **resume normal classes on Monday, April 13th**, honoring our current school calendar.

Today, we ask that students take home all instructional materials, such as textbooks, notebooks and supplemental materials. For students who are absent or unable to gather materials to take home, we will post on the District’s website a time when these items can be picked up.

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At this point, the State of Michigan is not requiring students to remotely complete curriculum (lessons, assessments etc). While not a requirement of the State, we are working on a plan to engage students in learning during this time. We will communicate that plan through email, principal's blogs, and on the District's website when final. Students who are currently enrolled in online courses WILL continue working on those classes as they are unaffected by this closure.

IMPORTANT MEDICATION INFORMATION: If your student will need medications currently on file at school or medical equipment used in the school setting during the closure, please contact Sue Patzer at the Central Administration Building (269-926-3101) so that arrangements can be made for pick up. Certain medications such as controlled substances must be picked up by a parent. Medications and equipment not needed during the closure can remain at school.

Sports/Extracurriculars

- All extracurricular activities and sporting events, including rehearsals and practices, are immediately postponed until school is reopened.
- All activities/performances scheduled in the auditorium are canceled.
- No students or non-essential staff will be allowed on campus until school is reopened.
- Re-scheduling of events will be determined on a case by case basis.

Field Trips

- All field trips are cancelled through Spring Break.
- Decisions about field trips taking place after Spring Break will be made in conjunction with the Berrien County Health Department.
- A determination on rescheduling will be made on a case by case basis.

Community Use of School Facilities

- All school facilities, including sports fields, will remain closed to the public during the school closure. Community access to facilities will resume when schools reopen.
- All facility rentals and community education classes are postponed until schools reopen.

Food Service

- Plans are being made to provide food to our students in need. Details of those plans will be communicated later this afternoon via email, principal's blogs, and on the District's website.

We thank you for your cooperation during these unprecedented times. During the mandated closure, the District will send regular updates to provide ongoing information to our families and staff. Updates will also be communicated through our usual channels.

Thank you,

SJPS Leadership Team

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