

Governor Bullock directed Montana's public K-12 schools to close starting tomorrow, March 16 until March 27. During this time, essential personnel will engage in planning for the future. In the interim, all extra-curricular activities have been suspended, and the school will be a closed campus environment indefinitely. This means that there will be no early morning basketball, no open gyms, and no practices of any kind.

Prior to this press release, basic protective measures like hand washing, encouragement of social distance, avoidance of face-touching, and staying home when ill have been supported. When discussing COVID-19 with children, we avoided speculation and remained cognizant of the mental and emotional strain that some conversations may cause. Please keep in mind that several people are disappointed about the suspension of these activities, but that the students are likely the most disappointed. Our Joliet students work diligently for these culminating events, and the postponement and cancellation is difficult to bear. This will require a great deal of patience for everyone, and we are truly sorry for this inconvenience.

As we well know at this point, environmental cleaning procedures can drastically cut down on COVID-19 transmissions. Evidence from the CDC indicates that the Coronavirus may survive for hours to days on surfaces, which could lead to transmissions of the disease. The CDC has released cleaning and disinfection guidance that schools may follow in order to best address possible contaminations in the school environment. In the absence of students, the custodial staff and maintenance staff will further safeguard our schools by engaging in these protocols.

Joliet Public School administration, in close collaboration with the Joliet Board of Education, will create collaborative planning teams that consist of staff members from different areas of the school. These teams will plan for extended distance learning in the unfortunate event that these closures continue beyond March 27th. As a general rule, schools can make targeted emergency response plans tailored to different types of emergency situations, including pandemic outbreaks. The work has been initiated, but will continue throughout the closure. Please stay tuned to our webpage and Facebook page, as this is where we will have pertinent information posted.

Schools should also ensure that they can provide meal services to students that need them during the course of any school closure. The U.S. Department of Agriculture ("USDA") has recently announced that schools may utilize summer meal programs and Grab-n-Go grants to provide meals to students at no cost. USDA has waived the requirement for schools that utilize these meal programs to provide the meals in group settings. For this reason, we will take orders for meals between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00 AM, and pick-up for these meals will be between 11:30 AM and Noon in front of Mrs. Williams' office. At this time, we will follow the menu found on the school website. To place an order call 406-962-3541 ext. 232.

Lastly, as educators, we want to ensure the continuity of education. We have a handful of students enrolled in college courses. Joliet Administration wants these students to continue this form of distance learning. For this reason, students needing to collect materials for these online classes should come to the school between the hours of 9AM and 11AM on Monday, March 16th. We want to ensure that all students in the district have access to the resources necessary for any distance coursework.