

March 18, 2020

TO: Parents and families of PSD students, and the Philomath community
FROM: The Philomath School Board
RE: COVID-19 (coronavirus) update

Dear parents, families and community members,

Thank you for all you do for our community, and especially for our students and schools. The students of the Philomath School District -- their well-being, safety and health, along with their education and development -- has always been the top priority of the school district, and the ongoing priority of the school board.

In an effort to keep the community informed, this letter is intended to provide background and context for recent developments and actions relating to COVID-19 (or coronavirus), and then more specifically the concerns and priorities of the school district, as we work through this unprecedented set of events together.

As Governor Kate Brown has recently announced, all public schools in Oregon are (as of this writing) to be closed starting Monday, March 16 and continuing through April 24. This may change as the situation with the spread of the virus changes across the state and country.

First and foremost, our focus is on student health, safety and well-being. We work tirelessly to make our schools a safe and welcoming environment to teach, and for students to learn and develop. We also realize that having kids come to school is important, and that keeping kids at home for extended periods of time does not contribute to their learning and development, and closing our schools presents hardships for many working parents and families. There are also many activities and events that help our students grow, develop and celebrate their many accomplishments -- and that sharing these accomplishments through events and celebrations with their parents, families and community members is important. Additionally, our school facilities are used by many organizations, and are frequently used to host community events. We realize the important roles that our schools play in the community.

To be clear, as of this date, we have no confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the Philomath School District -- students or staff.

What happens both until and after April 24th? Those plans are actively under development and will be communicated in a timely fashion. There are several specific challenges that we have as a district -- like most K-12 schools across the state (and unlike public universities) we do not have the capability to offer "online only" instruction. Not only are there equipment limitations, and limited access for many students and families (due to affordability and/or internet access), there are also limited online curriculum for grades K-8 in particular, and no provisions for the students who are on IEP's (Individualized Education Plans). Many of our students also rely on the ongoing health, behavioral and nutritional support that they receive directly (e.g. in person) from our schools. Additionally, many of our

programs, sports and activities require “hands on” and/or group activities to be successful – and these programs are ones that keep many kids engaged in and attending school regularly.

All that said, the Philomath School District is approaching the issue in a thoughtful, thorough and pragmatic fashion. Our intention is to take actions that best serve the health, safety and well-being of our students and staff, and strike an appropriate balance between taking prudent and appropriate actions to assure health and safety, while continuing the important work of educating our students and serving the community.

Please look to the school district’s website for ongoing communications and updates regarding the actions we’re taking as a district. School facilities will be closed to the public throughout the mandated shutdown, though many specific actions are under active discussion and development. One of those actions is that the district is putting in place “grab and go” meals for students, to ensure our students have access to nutritional needs. There will be many other decisions and changes to be made in the coming weeks. The district website will have the latest information.

For more information and resources regarding the virus, please refer to the following links:

Oregon Department of Education: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID19.aspx>

Benton County Health Department: <https://www.co.benton.or.us/coronavirus>

Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Sincerely,

The Philomath School Board