**NEWS** RELEASE

**DMPS TO COMPLETE ACADEMIC YEAR THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING**

DES MOINES, IA (April 8, 2020) –  Des Moines Public Schools, Iowa’s largest provider of PK-12 education, will complete the 2019-20 school year through distance learning, beginning next week for high school seniors, April 20 for other high school grades, and April 27 for all other students.

“With the COVID-19 pandemic projected to peak in Iowa in late April, returning to school immediately afterwards is not in the best interest of the health of our students, staff and community,” said Dr. Thomas Ahart, superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools. “On any given school day, 40,000 people pass through the doors of public schools in Des Moines. By keeping our school buildings closed, we will help mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus in the metro and hopefully lessen a second round of the virus.”

“We realize this is a significant change for our students, staff and families. Frankly, I wish we could see our students back in school tomorrow. But this is the right thing to do for the health and well-being of the entire community,” added Ahart. “I feel especially bad for our seniors – this is no way to end your time in high school – but we will be working on ways to celebrate the good work of the Class of 2020.”

Some key points in the plan being implemented by Des Moines Public Schools:

* The school district has been surveying and contacting all students and families about their access to computers and/or the internet at home.
* Computer and/or internet connections will be distributed to high school seniors later this week, with distance learning beginning on Monday, April 13.
* Distribution of computers and/or internet connections to students in other grade levels will begin next week.
* Distance learning will begin on Monday, April 20 for students in grades 9-11.
* Distance learning will begin on Monday, April 27 for students in grades PK-8.

The final five weeks of the school year will focus on essential standards of English Language Arts and Math, in addition to coursework offered in science, social studies, world language, art, music and physical education.

Learning opportunities and resources will be provided to families in three ways:

1. A library of high quality, independently accessible online resources will be available for families to choose from on our district website.
2. Print materials for grades PK-8 will be made available weekly at each of our meal sites, and via download on the school district website.
3. The development of grade level, standards-aligned learning content will be available via Canvas, the district’s online learning management system. These materials are being built now and will be available as grade levels return to lessons as noted above.

Teachers will play a critical role in maintaining contact with students each week to answer questions, engage with parents, provide assistance, and maintain equitable access to course content. Depending on student needs, teachers will work with families to create a personalized learning plan for the remaining five weeks of school.

The school district has set up DMPS@HOME ([dmschools.org/onlinelearning](https://www.dmschools.org/onlinelearning)) as a clearinghouse for information and resources for the final weeks of the 2019-20 school year.

DMPS will be communicating further details with students and parents in the days and weeks ahead through its daily emails. In addition, schools will also be reaching out directly to their students and families to provide assistance and answer questions.

“I realize students and families will have lots of questions, and we are working hard to find the right answers to make this change as smooth and positive an experience as possible. We are changing an educational system built over the course of a hundred years in a matter of weeks. But I promise that we will provide our students with a meaningful end to what has been one of the most unusual school years any of us will have ever experienced,” added Ahart.