

Good afternoon WPS parents,

At 4pm today, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly announced that Kansas schools would be closed for school as we know it through May 31. The Governor's executive order means that the remainder of the school year in the Wichita Public Schools will not occur in a traditional school environment that brings large numbers of students and staff together in one location.

I understand the hardship that school closure places on our families, as well as the social and emotional impact it may have on our students. I also realize that this announcement raises a lot of questions for you. It does for our WPS team too. Many district leaders have been working together this week, and will continue to do so, in order to work out answers to all of these questions. More information will be available in the coming days.

Here's what we know today:

- **School buildings will be closed for traditional classes beginning Monday, March 23. *Learning will continue, but it will look different.*** Kansas districts have been directed to develop "continuous learning plans." Exactly what that looks like for WPS is yet to be determined. It is important for you to understand that while school will look different, *learning will continue in some form*. There will be no delivery of any type of instruction to students prior to Monday, March 30, 2020. ***Please remain tuned in to your email and phone messages, as well as the district web site, for specific instructions about learning opportunities going forward.***
- **Spring events and athletics will be cancelled.** The most common questions we have received have been about prom events, spring athletics, and graduation ceremonies. The Governor's order means that these springtime traditions will NOT occur as scheduled. I know how important this time is for our students and their families, and I'm sorry that your students will not get the opportunities they have been looking forward to. As we plan for the future, we will talk about how we will celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates in an appropriate manner.
- **Students will still be able to graduate.** I will be working with our Board of Education and our high school leaders to determine what needs to be done in order to allow our graduating seniors to complete graduation requirements and receive their high school diplomas. Detailed information will be sent to seniors and their families in the next several weeks.
- **Meals for students will continue.** We are working on a plan to provide breakfast and lunch to students through the remainder of the school year. We will send you additional information soon about detailed arrangements for grab and go meals which will be available at no cost to children 18 and under, distributed at locations throughout our community.

Our team will continue to provide you with updates as we work our way through what is truly uncharted territory. Parents will receive official messages through Parentlink (phone and email), text alerts and on the district web site. Please continue to remain engaged in order to receive critical information updates as soon as they are available.

I know this is a time of great uncertainty, which can be especially trying on children who are used to the routine of the school year. Everyone involved - from state officials to our county health partners to the leaders within our school district - is working intently to do what is right and best for children and our community. There are no easy decisions, only decisions that we believe are being made with safety and health of our students in mind.

I pledge to continue keeping you informed as decisions are made that impact the work of the Wichita Public Schools. **You can expect the next update from WPS on Friday, March 20.** Until then, please focus on personal hygiene habits and health practices that will promote your family's well-being.

Respectfully,

Alicia Thompson

Superintendent