



Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D., Commissioner

NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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To: Nebraska Public School Superintendents, Non-Public School Administrators, & ESU Administrators

CC: State Board of Education, Commissioner's Cabinet and NDE Leadership

RE: Important Information Regarding Coronavirus COVID-19 3-14-20

Good evening,

I write this just a couple hours after the announcement of the first Douglas County Public Health determined community spread case. I think it is reasonable to expect in only a few days' time that we will see more such cases and the official decisions by the Governor to close schools region-by-region will begin. Today was the first day we had to experience the communication loop between County Public Health, State Public Health, the Governor's office and the Commissioner's office and a notice to schools in the affected ESU regions.

In each case, I will work with the Governor to get the official word of the community spread and I will notify the schools in the ESU region or regions affected. This information will be shared very shortly after it is determined and I will do my best to get word to ESU and school leaders as quickly as possible. Because our boundaries vary across the state, I will also discuss with the State's Chief Medical Officer, the Governor's Chief of Staff, and others the Governor designates. These decisions will be on the best information available and the areas will be called with the best indications of the community spread. Since I expect that Omaha and Lincoln areas by population are more likely to have confirmed cases initially, all surrounding areas should also be ready for such decisions soon. I do not believe that community spread will take long across the state when you look at Nebraska's traditional travel patterns. I am also aware that spread may happen from other states and areas. If you become aware of community spread near the borders those are things to take into consideration for your local school district.

In short, I think you should be thinking of every way possible to prepare to close down. I know the state assessment window is to open on Monday but that should NOT be a consideration for your decision to stay open or to close. I do think that as we continue to work with public health officials, you can be confident that communication is happening at appropriate levels. It is also very important that you stay looped in to the conversations and information. I think you can and should use whatever school time you remain open to help your staff and community understand the serious nature of COVID-19, especially for vulnerable populations and help people to limit contact and spread. As it does spread, our health care workers are of substantial importance so it will be important to assist health care workers with child care and other ways they may express.

I will chat with you tomorrow and encourage your attendance on the 2:00 PM Zoom call. We will have capacity for up to 1,000 participants and we will also record it so those who cannot join live will be able to watch at a later time.

An Important Request:

** Key to NDE serving you well is accurate data. I want to share these requests from my staff.

The NDE is asking all Nebraska districts/systems to access the **Staff Reporting 2019-2020** collection in the NDE Portal and ensure that all staff are reported and the contact information such as phone numbers and email addresses for all staff are accurate. We are asking that this be considered a high priority. The Staff Reporting information is the primary source for NDE to communicate with superintendents/principals/coordinators/heads/teachers, etc.

The Staff Reporting data collection is located under the **Student & Staff** tab in the NDE Portal. Options for submission are online entry and file upload. Staff Reporting Instructions are available here: [Staff Instruction Manual 2019-2020](#). When completing the Staff Reporting 2019-2020, double check to make sure the email addresses are correct for each staff member.

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education