

Dear HCS Family,

I am writing to update you about our efforts concerning coronavirus (COVID-19). The Huntsville City Board of Education and I hold the safety and health of our students, staff, families, and community above all else. With that in mind, my team and I have been working in anticipation of the implementation of measures like those we have seen from other state governments and school systems from around the country.

Being Prepared

Although the State of Alabama has not yet declared a state of emergency, in those states where such a declaration has occurred, school has not been canceled statewide. Instead, each district has made their own local decision based on the presence of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their community. We anticipate that a similar approach would be taken in Alabama. Given that we have not had a confirmed case in our community, we are not at this time planning to close schools. My team has developed contingency plans to serve our students while minimizing the risk of exposure to and spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), discussed below.

Instruction During An Extended School Closure

Given the rapidly changing nature of this serious health concern, we must be prepared for the possibility of a short-notice closure of schools. To do this, my team is working with schools to ensure that students are able to continue their coursework at home in the event of a school closure.

As you know, *our students in grades three through twelve* have access to district-issued laptops and currently use Clever and Canvas in their classes. These programs allow our students to access daily instruction and to complete course work. To ensure consistency for our students, our contingency plan will include the use of these familiar programs. Our teachers are trained on these platforms, and they will be able to use these programs to help our students in the event of a school closure.

The District will place assignments on the District's webpage for *students in kindergarten through second grade*. If needed, teachers will provide families with additional instructions needed to complete the assignments.

For students with limited access to the internet, our contingency plan calls for the use of hard copy materials. Please let your teacher know if you will need access to hard copies.

International School Trips

Given the circumstances in the countries our students were planning to visit and the increasing number of issues here, ***all international school trips for the rest of March are canceled.*** I understand the frustration that many of you may feel about this, but we believe this is the best decision for our students. Our schools are aware of this cancellation. If you have any questions, please reach out to the faculty sponsor of the trip or your school principal.

Domestic School Trips

As I mentioned in my earlier letter, we are evaluating each trip on a case-by-case basis. We are continuing to monitor information shared by the World Health Organization, the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. State Department, the Alabama State Department of Education, and the Alabama State Department of Public Health, and basing our decisions on what we believe to be in the best interest of student safety. Although we have canceled few trips at this time, we will continue to evaluate each trip as new information is received. Schools will share specific information about field trips with their families.

This is subject to change with relatively short notice. If this changes, your school will let you know as soon as possible.

Extracurricular Activities (Sports, Performances, etc.)

One of the main reasons for the measures in this letter is to limit the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in order to protect our most vulnerable populations. Once a community has confirmed cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19), it is important to minimize the number of large gatherings. There are many normal spring school activities that lead to large gatherings including sporting events, choral and theater performances, Greenpower events, etc.

If we become aware of a risk of exposure, we will take steps to limit or temporarily cancel extracurricular activities. This may include total cancellation of events. As with other things discussed in this letter, ***we will let you know as soon as possible of any cancellations.***

Regarding rescheduling of events, the AHSAA just released guidance for districts. That guidance included the rescheduling of games with playoff implications. Our schools have been informed of this guidance, and our athletic directors for each school will work with the District team to reschedule these games.

Link to AHSAA letter: <http://www.ahsaa.com/Portals/0/MEMO-%20COVID-19%20v1.pdf>

Conclusion

As always, thank you for your commitment to our schools, and thank you for working with us. We will do our best to update you as quickly as possible during this situation.

For updates please see: <https://www.huntsvillecityschools.com/coronavirus>