



Northern Cass School District No. 97

Home of the Jaguars



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Dr. Cory Steiner, Superintendent
Doug Margerum, Secondary Principal
John O'Day, AD/Dean of Learners
Crysta Schenck, Elementary Principal
Paige Carlson, Business Manager

March 13th, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardian,

Considering recent events related to the Coronavirus (Covid-19), I want to let you know we are monitoring the situation and following the recommendations from Governor Burgum and the North Dakota Health Department. We are discussing contingency plans and have started precautionary measures.

The guidance we have received has mainly included things such as washing hands frequently, limiting touching your face, and using hand sanitizer. We have been diligent in our cleaning and disinfecting process. We will start new protocols at lunch (Monday) including required use of hand sanitizer, wrapped plastic silverware, and no self-serving of school food by learners. Nurse Pam went into every PK-5 learning center today to talk to learners about the recommendations we have been given for taking precautions.

I am asking that families start to do the following:

1. Keep your children at home if they aren't feeling well. If symptoms worsen seek medical attention and follow their instructions for attending school. **Effective immediately, NCPS is suspending all attendance penalties that relate to illness.**
2. Remind your children to wash their hands frequently.
3. Encourage your children to cover coughs and sneezes.
4. Start thinking about your plans if school is cancelled for an extended period. Keep in mind that daycare services could also be cancelled.

There is a possibility school could be cancelled for a period of time. This will come at the direction of Governor Burgum, the Department of Health, or Superintendent of Public Instruction. If school is cancelled, I will work with the local school board and Department of Public Instruction on the potential of days being made up. The trend nationally is to be cautious so please know school closing is a strong possibility.

At this time, we will continue school as normal. I am receiving continual communication with the Department of Health, Department of Public Instruction, and the Governor's office. At this point, the guidance has been to be more aware while placing an emphasis on local control and decision-making. If Covid-19 begins to spread more rapidly through our area, I believe the decision to close public schools will be made by a combination of the groups and leaders mentioned above. I would like our parents/guardians to start thinking about the impact to them and how they might react. Nationally, the trend seems to be closure for 10-14 days. Without school and the potential of daycares closing, the impact on families would be significant. I can't say if or when this will happen but please start to think about how you might address this as a family and balance your own professional responsibilities in the event of an extended school closure.

The next step in this equation would be the time we aren't in school and how that is addressed. ND doesn't have any laws about allowing e-learning. I think that might be something enacted to get us

through this. Currently, we're still required to meet state law for hours of instruction. If a shutdown is issued state-wide, I don't believe we'll be required to extend our school year, but that potential is there.

There are many activities this time of year which could be impacted. We will work with the North Dakota High School Activities Association to determine whether events will be held, postponed, or cancelled. All learners affected will be notified and we'll do our best to get that information out to parents and community members via our website and social media in a timely manner. **Close-Up and the music trip have been postponed.** Further information on these events be shared when available. The foreign language trip will continue as scheduled at this time.

There is currently one confirmed case of Covid-19 in the state of North Dakota. Several tests have been performed in the last 48 hours and all were negative. North Dakota remains at a low- risk level according to the Department of Health. Again, I stress how rapidly the situation has changed in the last 48 hours from a national perspective. We'll continue to monitor and adapt plans as necessary and assess as situations develop in our state and region. During a potential health crisis, it can feel we overreact. I don't disagree, but if we are complacent, the situation may become far worse.

A hotline is available through the health department for questions concerning the virus. Call 866-207-2880 with your questions. This hotline is open Monday through Friday from 7am to 7pm.

Please monitor our website (www.northerncassschool.org) and social media accounts for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cory Steiner", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Cory Steiner
Superintendent