



Dr. Lindsey Hall, Superintendent
Mahomet-Seymour Schools

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March 11, 2020, 4:06 PM

Hello Bulldog Parents/Guardians,

I wanted to take this opportunity to update all of you on a number of very recent developments regarding the COVID 19 Pandemic. Please know that information surrounding this situation changes almost hourly. I receive regular updates from the IL State Board of Education, and the situation is constantly evolving. I will keep you updated as much as possible—but I also encourage you to visit the ISBE website where you'll find updates, as well as health departments—local, state and national.

On Monday evening of this week, superintendents in the state of Illinois received an email from Dr. Carmen Ayala, our state superintendent, stating that it is “imperative” that districts work on an e-learning plan in the event schools need to close for Corona virus. An e-learning plan would allow learning to continue mostly via technology while our students are not in school, while also having access to their teacher(s) electronically.

E-learning plans have been available to public school districts in Illinois for two years now for school closing days---i.e. if you close for weather related purposes, you can implement your e-learning plan, it is considered a work day for teachers, and the day does not have to be made up by staff or students. (Unlike the “traditional” snow days—like we had on February 14th, which we'll be making up in May, because our district does not have an approved e-learning plan.)

While our schools are rich in technology, there are many issues associated with e-learning plans, and our school district hasn't moved ahead with adopting an e-learning plan. There are multiple layers of “approvals” necessary for e-learning plans above and beyond our local board of education. In light of the Corona virus situation, the Illinois State Board of Education is working to waive those approval requirements and expedite the process. However, there is no timeline for doing that.

On Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Rummel and I met with our principals, district nurse Nita Bachman and Director of Technology Jared Lynn put together a framework for an e-learning plan in case schools need to close due to COVID-19.

Please know, that as of the sending of this email, Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 4:05 p.m., there is no plan to close school or implement an e-learning plan.

However, we've been asked to be prepared, and we're doing that. The big picture is that 3rd through 12th graders would have Chromebooks with them to engage electronically with their learning experiences. (We have enough Chromebooks at Lincoln Trail to send home one with each student.). PreK-2nd grade students are a bit more challenging to accommodate under an e-learning plan because they do not have Chromebooks, but as you know we have fantastic teachers who can work on this and come up with a plan for our youngest students. Also, please know that as of right now, the approval process for e-learning plans is still in place—we cannot just implement our plan without proper approval or with the waiver of the approval process by the Illinois State Board of Education. So, we are preparing as much as we can out of an abundance of caution and our teachers are aware of our need to prepare an e-learning plan. The implementation of any e-learning plan will require a great deal of flexibility from all of us.

“Committed to Excellence”

I am happy to answer any questions you might have—send me an email, a text message or give me a call. In advance, I thank you for your flexibility through a very interesting time in our lives. If anyone is equipped to handle a situation like this, it's public educators and our wonderful community—so I have every confidence in all of us to work together to navigate this situation.

Also, please know that any decisions moving ahead regarding schools or school closure will be made in coordination with and guidance from the experts with the public health departments. Please continue to monitor communications from public health departments as they are kept current and are most accurate. I will also continue to update parents as new or changing information becomes available.

I also urge you, if you are traveling over spring break, to familiarize yourselves with travel restrictions or other issues that could arise due to travel. This information is available through the Centers for Disease Control.

Thank you in advance for your understanding, patience and support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lindsey A. Hall

Superintendent of Schools