

Decorah Community School District
Emergency Closure Update
March 27, 2020



Good Afternoon,

It is hard to believe that two weeks have gone by since students and staff were last in our schools. I continue to be thankful for the dedicated work of our Decorah staff, and the support of our families and community.

As this second week of emergency closure comes to an end, I want to address a few items.

Emergency Closure

At this time, we continue to operate under the guidance of the original emergency closure recommendation made by Governor Reynolds. The dates of closure are March 16 through April 10, 2020. My hope is that we will know if Governor Reynolds is going to extend the recommended closure dates by the end of the week next week. This would give us the week of April 3 to engage in additional planning for an extended closure.

Distance Learning

The question that comes up when thinking about a longer closure is, will the Iowa Department of Education change its guidance to local school districts regarding opportunities to learn. Our district leadership team is engaging in frequent contingency planning, and this is one of the items we are considering. You can find the current Iowa Department of Education guidance under which we are operating at this [link](#). Should guidance change, we will adjust, and communicate with families and students about those adjustments.

COVID-19 and Children

It is likely the reality of this extended emergency closure has set in for your children. I know my 4th grade son is missing his friends, his teacher, and the normal routine of school. If you feel your child(ren) need some support from their school counselor, please don't hesitate to reach out via email or phone. I know Mr. Trewin, Mr. Stock, and Mrs. Hahn are eager to support students and families through this stressful time.

You can reach your child's counselor through email, or by calling your school.

- DHS Counselor- Pat Trewin
 - pat.trewin@decorah.k12.ia.us
 - 563-382-3643
- DMS Counselor- Lee Stock
 - lee.stock@decorah.k12.ia.us
 - 563-382-8427
- Elementary Counselor- Amanda Hahn
 - Amanda.hahn@decorah.k12.ia.us
 - 563-382-3771

I have received a couple requests from people in the community asking for assistance in communicating to our middle school and high school students about the importance of their adherence to recommendations about staying home, not congregating in groups, and practicing social distancing. I am sharing a link for parents that shares some excellent guidance for talking with your middle school and high school-aged children about COVID-19, and each person's role in flattening the curve. Please take some time this weekend to have a purposeful conversation as a family about everyone's responsibility to practice the recommendations of our Governor.

[Supporting Teenagers and Young Adults During the Coronavirus Crisis](#)

Here is a link to a resource for younger children.

[Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)

Realistic Expectations

If you are like me, your Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram feeds have been full of COVID-19-closure student learning successes and failures. I have seen things I think are wonderful ideas for student learning experiences, and I have seen things that make me sad for the children experiencing them. Last week, I shared my Lane family lesson plan with our staff, and today I am sharing it with you.

Weekly Plan

- Read and talk about books every day.
- Listen to music, and play and sing music every day.
- Write and illustrate stories and comics as desired.
- Safely be in nature, look around, point things out, and answer questions with questions.
- Put some good out into the world.
- Lego

I think it is also important to think about realistic time expectations for emergency closure learning. My hope is that no student is having to sit and do one thing for longer than the equivalent of their age times three. So, for my fourth-grade son, I would expect that he can focus on one task for about 25 to 30 minutes. After that, he needs a break, he needs to get up and move around, or do something else.

Please continue to use reliable sources such as the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control for updates and information about COVID-19. Thank you for your efforts to protect the health and safety of our community, our state, our country and our world.

Mark M. Lane, Superintendent of Schools