

Decorah Community School District
Message to Families
April 24, 2020



Good Afternoon,

It is hard to believe that six weeks have passed since students and teachers were last together in our classrooms. I continue to be grateful for the resilience, dedication, and service-focus of our staff, and our community. Unique times can create unique stressors and emotions. I have experienced this in my own family. My daughter lives in Iowa City, and is completing online classes in anticipation of graduating from the University of Iowa next month. This has not been the final semester of college she envisioned. My two sons are both at home. One is completing the second semester of his freshman year at Iowa State University online. The other is a fourth grader at Carrie Lee, and while he is spending time each day engaged in online learning, he misses his classmates and his teachers.

Early this week, the Iowa Department of Education shared some helpful guidance related to assisting children with managing stress. I found the guidance informative, and I wanted to share a few ideas in this weekly communication.

- **Remain calm and positive.** Reassure children that they are going to be safe and that you as their caretaker are taking steps to ensure that you will stay safe as well.
- **Maintain a schedule.** Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes.
- **Create an environment that allows children to ask questions that matter to them.** Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- **Monitor and consider limiting exposure to media and adult conversations about COVID-19.** Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety. If your children are watching television, try to watch with them or make sure you are available to answer questions about what they have heard.
- **Encourage healthy behaviors:** eating well, sleeping well, and playing outside (while still practicing social distancing). More than ever, schedule time for interaction, play, and fun.
- **Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting COVID-19.** Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.
- **Provide opportunities for children to help,** whether it is washing their hands or showing kindness to others (drawing a picture for someone, writing a letter), children benefit from being able to contribute and make a positive difference.

Retrieval of Supplies and Personal Belongings

Since Governor Reynolds announced the closure of Iowa schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, we have received questions about when students will be allowed to return to clean out lockers and desks in order to collect all personal belongings and school supplies. We will wait for a change from the current restrictions in place for Winneshiek County through Governor Reynolds Proclamation issued April 16, 2020 before we allow students and families to collect personal items and supplies. Once guidance allows, we will develop a safe routine and schedule, and communicate with our students and families.

Student Progress Reports

When the emergency closure began on March 16 we were closing in on the last day of the third quarter. In a typical year, we would have issued 3rd quarter progress report, but as we are all aware this hasn't been a typical year. Now that we know PK-8 students will be engaged in voluntary learning opportunities, and 9-12 students will be engaged in required learning services for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, we are making plans for issuing progress reports.

The Iowa Department of Education has provided guidance to Iowa schools regarding what districts can consider learning and work for which credit can be given.

PK-8- Voluntary Learning Opportunities

- Work completed during voluntary learning cannot be graded and is not for credit
- A report card can only be reflective of learning and coursework that was completed before the emergency closure began.

High School- Required Learning

- Work completed during required learning can be graded and is for credit.
- Second semester reporting will be reflective of work completed January 21 to March 13, April 14 to May 27 during required learning.
- Work that was assigned, but not submitted prior to March 13, but was subsequently completed and turned in may also be assessed and included in the second semester grade.

In accordance with the guidance from the Iowa Department of Education, the district will make 3rd quarter progress reports available through PowerSchool to PK-8 students and families the morning of Wednesday, May 6, 2020. We want to share this information in a timely fashion, but we also want to be sure people are aware that these reports are likely an incomplete picture due to the fact that the emergency closure interrupted learning while there were still several days left in the third quarter.

Second semester progress reports for students in grades 9 - 12 will be available after grades have been entered and GPAs have been calculated. This process typically takes two weeks to

complete, as we want to make sure final transcripts for the year are accurate. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we work through this process. Please contact the high school office with any questions you may have.

If your child has an IEP you can expect to receive goal progress reports aligned to the timelines described for above.

You can expect to receive more detailed progress report information from your building principal in the days to come.

I hope everyone has a relaxing weekend, and continues to stay safe and healthy. Thank you for your support of Decorah Schools.

Mark M. Lane, Superintendent of Schools