

*Dr. Joshua J. Isaacson*  
*Superintendent*

*De Soto #73 Public School District*

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*Assistant*  
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*Superintendent's Office*

*Ensuring learning, growth, and success for all.*

March 15, 2020

Dear De Soto Families and Community Members,

On Friday, March 13, 2020, Missouri Governor Mike Parson, signed an executive order declaring a State of Emergency in Missouri in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Representatives from the Jefferson County Health Department, Jefferson County Administration Office, Mercy Hospitals, and Jefferson County Schools met today and determined that out of an abundance of caution, all Jefferson County Public Schools will close beginning at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17th. We will re-evaluate after two weeks.

Keeping our kids, educators, families, and communities safe is our top priority. We are using every tool we have to protect our community and will continue to do so in the coming days and weeks. We did not make the decision to close schools lightly. The determination to close schools was made with the health and wellbeing of everyone in mind. We understand everyone will be impacted and lives will be disrupted by our decision, but we believe we need to take such actions to protect our families and communities from this outbreak. Measures like closing schools and restricting mass gatherings are intended to slow the spread of the disease and assist our healthcare system, so those affected can receive the care needed. Early signs are beginning to occur with five confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the State of Missouri as of this morning. Based on trends from around the world over the past few months, spreading to more communities in our country over the next few weeks is likely.

The purpose of giving notice on the closure is to give each district in Jefferson County ample time to make plans for students, families, and educators. At De Soto #73 School District, we are keeping our professional development for staff as scheduled for Monday, and students will continue to be in attendance on Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

The anticipated reopening date is April 6, 2020; however, the reopening date is subject to change pending further information.

There will be no practices or games for any of the teams involved in MSHSAA athletics and/or all other activities thru April 3, 2020. This will include use of facilities by outside groups or teams.

During the closure, we are going to continue doing all we can to support the students and families of our county with resources they may need while schools are closed.

On Monday, a scheduled PD day for our district, staff will be gathering resources to send home with our students to help them keep previously learned classroom material fresh and to use this time to revisit this past learning and practice skills. There will be resources provided both on paper and online. We are not implying this time will be “school as usual,” nor are we asking parents to do the job of a teacher during such an unexpected and uncertain time. Many of our families could be affected by illness themselves, which will require all of their attention and care. Regardless of issues outside of our control, we do know parents want students to continue to grow and develop. Many of our students rely on structure and routine and *enjoy* the work of school and learning. We want parents to have the resources they need to handle these weeks at home as best fits their family’s needs.

We are also working to gather and communicate methods of ongoing communication with our students. Many students will feel nervous with this unexpected change in plans and isolation from friends and teachers. Our principals, teachers, and staff will want to be in contact with our kids during this time, as well.

Tuesday students will be in session to receive instruction on how to access these resources and services to maintain learned material at home over the next two weeks. They will gather and take home their classroom materials, Chromebooks (grades 7-12), and medications (as needed). They will have the opportunity to checkout classroom/library books.

We will continue to communicate using our various methods. Please ensure your contact information is up-to-date with the building office and you are connected to one or more of the following:

- District Website dedicated to COVID-19 information: [bit.ly/2WjxOgx](https://bit.ly/2WjxOgx)
- SchoolMessenger-phone and email
- Facebook page @DeSoto73Schools
- Twitter @DeSoto73

Thank you for your partnership during this time.

Respectfully,



Dr. Josh Isaacson,  
Superintendent of Schools



Dr. Doréan Dow,  
Assistant Superintendent