



COVID-19 Coronavirus Update (2)  
March 15, 2020

Parents and Families of our Helena Public Schools,

Thank you again for your time and attention this afternoon. As a follow-up to the previous message, the below information is intended to provide additional context pertaining to what you can expect from the Helena Public Schools in the coming days. With the closure of all public schools in the State of Montana, the Helena Public Schools will move to a digital learning bridge for the duration of the closure.

The closure begins tomorrow, Monday, March 16, as campuses will only be open to pick-up personal belongings, books and, if applicable, medication. As it stands this closure will take us to our scheduled Spring Break, March 30 through April 3. That noted, the earliest possible time our students and teachers could return to an in-person learning environment will be Monday, April 6.

In the Helena Public Schools, we have been working for several weeks to consider everything from remote learning to needed access to school meals and supplies. More details will arrive in the coming days as we work through this unprecedented situation. For now, please see information below.

**Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17:**

School campuses will be open tomorrow from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm for students to retrieve personal belongings, books and, if applicable, medication. If medication pick-up is needed, we ask that a parent or adult family member over the age of 18 reports to your school office to retrieve your child's needed medication. Students are encouraged to bring available textbooks home. However, in classes where classroom sets of textbooks are occasionally utilized, such texts will not be available for checkout as that learning material will be covered using other means during this in-person closure.

Our school kitchens will be offering hot breakfasts and lunches for pickup at students' regularly scheduled times for both Monday, 3/16 and Tuesday, 3/17. School meals will move to grab-and-go options by Wednesday, 3/18. More information pertaining to school lunches will be forthcoming over the next two days.

Transportation, SACC services, school sports/athletics, student clubs and all school-associated and/or on campus activities and meetings have been suspended and will not operate during this closure.

By Wednesday, March 18, our school campuses will be closed to all non-essential personnel. For those students needing technology, a schedule with times/locations is forthcoming. Students will be able to checkout a Chromebook during Wednesday's designated time. For the duration of this closure, email will be the preferred form of home/school communication.

**Remote Learning:**

We have been planning to implement remote learning since we learned that the COVID-19 outbreak may become widespread to the point that we would need to close school buildings. Remote learning will be a new opportunity for most of our students and will look different by grade and age-range. In the coming days, you will receive specific information pertaining to how your child/children can access online content associated with our school district. While not the same as

in-person learning, our educators will be working to design learning opportunities that will maintain the integrity of teaching and learning during this time of ambiguity. Students engaged in online experiences can expect to access materials via our Clever learning portal using their normal username and login information (more information to come).

In the coming days, you will receive additional information pertaining to remote learning first from the Helena Public Schools (3/17) and then your child's teacher/teachers (3/18). Remote learning materials will be posted/communicated beginning Thursday, 3/19 and continuing through the duration of this closure (with the exception of Spring Break).

- High Schools (including PAL): High school students can expect a remote learning environment that will provide a mix of online opportunities as well as familiar research and assignment. These will be coordinated by class, by their specific teachers.
- Middle Schools: Similar to high school, middle school students can expect a blended remote learning environment that will provide a variety of learning materials, interactions and assignments.
- Elementary Schools: Remote learning will vary for elementary students. Younger grades can expect more traditional learning materials, shared via email. Older grades can expect a remote environment that is more blended in nature (tradition and online).
- Pre-Kindergarten: Preschool students will not be expected to engage in online learning environments. However, preschool classroom staff will connect families with resources and recommended activities to support remote learning.
- Special Education: Our Special Education educators will be coordinating efforts to ensure student educational needs are met to the greatest extent possible during these unique circumstances. Special Education educators and related service providers will be working to design and provide opportunities and supports to students in a manner consistent with their individualized education program. Please expect that this will look different for every child and may vary significantly from the learning environment that they are accustomed to in their classroom. Nevertheless, our educators will be considering applicable resources and opportunities over the coming days and will be working to reach out to students and parents to provide support.
- Gifted & Talented: For children receiving Gifted & Talented services, please look for communication from your lead teacher as to opportunities and materials that will further the course of study that they were focusing on prior to this closure.
- Student Services/Counseling: If your child is actively receiving student support services, please expect contact from the school-professional that provides their school-based services

#### Technology Checkout:

All of the components and resources associated with the above described remote learning environment will function from any personal home computer, tablet or smartphone device. Should technology be associated with your child's remote environment (largely grades 3 through 12) and you need technology, Chromebook checkout will be available this coming week on Wednesday, 3/18 between 8:00 am and noon at your child's high school or middle school. Elementary students needing to checkout a Chromebook will be able to do so at their elementary school between noon and 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday. This checkout will occur at school sites only but will be open to all students that require a device. We are also actively working on home internet solutions and in the coming days, we expect to provide additional information. For now, please see forthcoming updates for times and locations associated with Chromebook pick-up sites.

Please expect daily communication from the Helena Public Schools as we quickly transition in association with this needed closure. While I know there are countless unanswered questions that remain, I am confident that we will do what is necessary during this challenging time to respond, support and rise together as a community. I want to thank the hundreds of you who provided input into this difficult decision. Along with my colleagues in the Helena Public Schools, I cherish the opportunity to serve our Helena children and families. Thank you for that opportunity and for your continued support.

Best,



Tyler Ream  
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools