

DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

By Dr. Lane Abrell
Superintendent of Schools
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Dear District 202 Families, Staff and Community,

As I write this, we are on Day 2 of Governor Pritzker's two-week mandated school closure because of the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic.

To call this unprecedented, extraordinary times is a gross understatement.

Obviously, District 202 and our country have experienced and survived many large-scale challenges before, and we will do so again. Yet the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic presents a different kind of problem because, frankly, we don't know yet what we don't know.

However, I want to reassure everyone that District 202 is doing everything we can, based on the latest guidance and direction from health experts and state education officials.

We did a tremendous amount of work quickly and efficiently to prepare to keep our schools open and operate safely – right up until the minute, late last Friday afternoon, when the governor announced that all schools would be closed through March 30th.

At that point we scrambled to reassess and rework nearly every bit of our plan. We worked late into the evening and over the weekend so we could give families and staff accurate, reliable information as quickly as possible and adequate time to prepare for a new “unknown.”

I share that not to pat ourselves on the back. That is our job as administrative leadership. Rather, I hope that this information provides some idea of how seriously we are taking – and always take – the safety and security of our families and staff.

Meanwhile, even as we dared to exhale, the guidance that we relied on changed around us, several times (and continues changing.) Truly, it has been like trying to change a tire while the car is going 50 miles per hour.

At this point, we know that:

- School is closed through March 30th. Coincidentally, our Spring Break runs from March 30th to April 3rd, as previously scheduled.
 - But the governor may extend his closure, which appears to be a distinct possibility. So, *the earliest* that students and staff may return would be April 6th.
- Likewise, the governor's two-week closure is considered an “Act of God” under the law. That means we do not have to make up that time at the end of the year like we normally have to for snow days.

- We have posted a long list of **optional** “extended learning” opportunities on our district and school websites and strongly encourage our students and families to take advantage of these programs to continue academic engagement during this closure.

In addition, we will soon post a detailed “extended learning” plan on our websites. This work is ongoing and will continue for as long as needed. For more about the State Board of Education’s “extended learning” directives related to this closure, visit <http://www.isbe.net/covid19>.

- We are serving free breakfast and lunch to any child 18 years old and younger, no matter where they live or what school they attend. (And we have received numerous incredibly kind offers from people to volunteer with this food service.)

The numbers of students taking advantage of this program doubled from Day 1 to Day 2, and we expect them to continue rising. **For more details please visit the District 202 website: www.psd202.org**

We are still waiting for state guidance about special education services and numerous other important topics that we routinely address every normal school day.

A myriad of other important questions still must be answered about athletics, testing, Prom, graduations and, for that matter, whether we’re even going to complete this semester.

We understand your frustrations and are working hard to get clarity and minimize the impact on our students and families.

The good news is, hundreds, if not thousands of laws dictate nearly every aspect of public education. These laws are designed to protect and ensure equal rights for each of our students, staff and families.

The bad news is that these laws have rarely if ever been tested like they are now.

So, we will continue to do what we do best – work together with our community to prepare all our students for the future.

Thank you to everyone for your amazing patience, kindness, understanding, generosity and support.

Please visit the “COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS” page on our district website and all 30 of our school websites for the most current information.

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Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202

