

March 12, 2020



## Message from Superintendent Jarvis about School Closure

Dear PSD Parents and Staff:

Our schools - and all of the schools in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties - have now begun a journey never before experienced by most of us. Washington Governor Jay Inslee has directed that all schools in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties will be closed for the next six weeks, beginning Tuesday, March 17, 2020. We will be open on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> to provide time for students and staff interaction prior to this long closure.

In today's message, I will not try to answer the myriad of questions, but I want to try to give you a broad picture of the tentative thinking. We fully recognize that a closure of this length is unprecedented. It represents a loss to our families and children while meeting the need to keep them safe.

We have worked hand-in-hand with the public health professionals, epidemiologists, scientists and leaders to deal with the pandemic that is COVID-19. The consensus is that we are now collectively moving to the next stage that will help control the spread of the virus by limiting public gatherings. Governor Inslee has announced significant restrictions on the size of public meetings and events. The next point of control was closure of regular school operations.

We will do everything we can to assist the Governor and the public health officials, while also recognizing at least three major issues that confront us: 1) Students will be missing six weeks or more of education, as well as the spring events that normally accompany school; 2) Disruption of the schools bring major disruptions to families and workplaces. In particular, lack of childcare could endanger the ability of first responders and health care

workers to respond to the crisis; and 3) Some children are highly dependent upon school breakfast and lunch for their nutritional needs.

In response to these issues, and others for which we have no normal business practices, we will be using our first days to “reorganize” the school district and staff. We will be looking for ways to assist families and communities, but most of all, to assist our students.

In general, it is our plan to ask our staff to explore ways in which we can engage with students and support them through this long period. In effect, the school and district staff will be engaged in the work they do best, connecting with the children and young people for whom they care so much. We also are examining alternatives that might permit us to provide food and nutrition to our children. Additionally, we have been asked to explore possibilities that could assist with childcare, without generating a gathering that would defeat the original purpose.

After we have a chance to engage the staff in this discussion, much more detail will be provided to parents about the possibilities. We recognize that certain staff members may not be able to work during this epidemic because of their personal or family health circumstances, but we are attempting to keep the district workforce employed as much as possible.

It is my hope this helps provide a picture of our efforts over these next few days. More details will emerge over the next few days, and we have established a telephone hotline (253-530-1111) for students, staff and parents to register questions, concerns and comments.

We understand safety is everyone’s primary concern. We ask for your help as we work through this incredible challenge.

Sincerely,

Dr. Art Jarvis  
Superintendent



**#WEarePSD**

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