

Skagit County School Districts

For Joint Release from all Skagit County School Districts

Contact: Varies by school district

Skagit County public schools to close March 17 to April 24 due to COVID-19

Skagit County public schools know that the past few weeks have been stressful for many in our communities because of the continued spread of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. We are grateful to all of our staff and families for navigating this situation with our school districts.

Following the guidance of Washington State Governor Jay Inslee this afternoon, all Skagit County public schools will be closed beginning next **Tuesday, March 17** through at least **April 24, 2020**.

The reasons for this recommendation include the following:

- The state's confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to expand
- Schools have a significant number of staff members and students who fall within the high-risk categories

All Skagit County public schools will be open Monday, March 16. Parents should retrieve any of their child's medications and other essential personal items that they need to have with them while schools are closed.

Closing schools now will help to significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Although children are not likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19, they can spread it to others who are at high risk. We expect to receive further guidance from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in the coming days and will provide an update as soon as we are able.

We want to assure the community that this is not a decision we have made lightly or without considerable thought and consideration. As superintendents, we regularly make challenging decisions and this has been the most difficult in any of our careers. We recognize and understand the impact this will have on our families, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Additionally, we are working on plans to determine what childcare options we may be able to offer for first responders and healthcare workers. Each school district will also be evaluating how we can best meet the nutritional needs of our students. We will be sharing more information about these items as soon as plans and details are finalized.

Additional information will be coming to staff and families in the coming days for each school district. We will share this information via email, as well as posting on school websites and social media channels as applicable. Please remember, this is an unprecedented event and is evolving rapidly. The legislature is considering action to address graduation timelines and course credit. However, it is understood at this time that the school year will not continue past June 19, 2020. We will know more as time goes on. We are working with the Governor, OSPI, Superintendents across the state, public health advisors from across the state along with our local community leaders and administration to do what is best for our students, staff, families and community members. At this time, reducing the spread of this disease is the best strategy for all.

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School Closure FAQs

Which schools are closing, and for how long?

The Governor has declared that all schools will be closed for at least six weeks. Schools will close no later than Tuesday, March 17, and will not reopen before Monday, April 27. Check [the OSPI website for a closure tracker](#).

Why are schools closing?

There are multiple factors that led to this decision:

- The number of cases is rapidly expanding.
- Health officials can no longer map the contacts of infected individuals reliably.
- School districts within the region are experiencing unparalleled student absences.
- Many districts are on the brink of no longer being able to staff their schools due to staff absences.
- [Mandatory school closures will save lives](#)

Are childcare options being provided during closures?

Closing schools has a major impact on our ability to staff hospitals, health care facilities, and other fire and medical departments. Superintendents have been asked to provide childcare, at no cost, to families who are in the medical field or who are first responders. Districts will be taking Tuesday, March 17 to Thursday, March 19 to explore whether we can support emergency childcare on a limited basis and within public health guidelines.

If childcare options are provided, how will those children be kept safe?

Districts that provide childcare will need to take every measure possible to keep students and staff safe, including providing social distancing, ensuring consistent hand

washing, sending students and staff home if they're sick, and routinely disinfecting commonly touched surfaces.

Will food service provide breakfast and lunch for my student?

The governor spoke to school districts providing meals to students. Districts will be taking Tuesday, March 17 to Thursday, March 19 trying to explore whether we can support emergency food service on a limited basis and within public health guidelines.