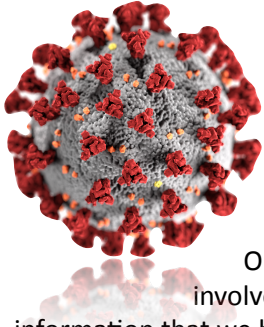


March 12, 2020

An open letter to our community regarding the Coronavirus pandemic from Heartland Community Schools

I would first like to say that we take the safety of our students, staff, parents, and community members very seriously. We have heightened cleaning protocols in place at school and are working with the health department, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Department of Education as we navigate through these uncharted times.



As you have noticed, there have been some major decisions made across the country over the last couple of days regarding large events and in regard to students attending colleges across the nation. We, too, have discussions several times per day, about upcoming events or possible school closures and how we can prepare for or completely forego these activities for the safety of all involved.

Our discussions, at this point, consider each event independently and we base our decision on who is involved, the number in attendance, the location, the age of those in attendance, and the latest information that we have available at the time. We want to be prudent in making good decisions regarding health implications, but also gauge whether the level of risk is sufficient to cancel an event.

We have numerous activities scheduled over the next few weeks, such as the smorgasbord, the school play, state FFA and FBLA conventions, district music, athletic events, and others. For events that are sanctioned by the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA), we have little or no control as to whether they take place. Should they remain scheduled, we will decide at the time if we will attend. For our own events, such as field trips or the school play, we are planning to continue as normal as of today. This may change hour to hour, but allow me to explain our reasoning.

For smaller events, such as a field trip to the Capitol or to view the Sandhill cranes, our students, staff, and parents will have a low chance of exposure to a large number of people and these events are in communities where schools are still in session and there is no community spread of the disease. By limiting exposure at these locations, such as eating a sack lunch in the park, versus at a food court, we and health officials believe that the risk of infection is very low. While this may change up to the day of the event, as always, parents have the prerogative to keep their child in school rather than participate in the field trip or event.

A group of individuals in charge of the upcoming smorgasbord met this morning and due to the age demographic of attendees, the number of attendees, their close proximity to one another, and the fact that attendees come from a wide geographical area, this event has been regrettably cancelled for this year. We did consider postponement, but with all the moving parts within this event, it was decided that we must cancel. Ticket holders may request a refund and we will gladly oblige. Because this is the major fundraiser for the instrumental music program for the year, if we do not hear from ticket holders, we will consider these funds a donation to the program. In the near future, we will distribute information as to how you may be able to purchase some of the foods from the smorgasbord, if you wish to do so.

As I mentioned earlier, there is new information released constantly and our decisions will be based upon the best information that we have available at the time. It is a very fluid situation and plans may change from one hour to the next. Until then, please continue to wash your hands, cover your cough and sneezes, and stay home if you are not feeling completely healthy.

Thank you for your continued support and if you have any questions, please contact us at 402-723-4434.

Be well,

Brad Best
Superintendent of Schools



We Are Heartland!

#BeTheDifference