



Palominas Elementary School District #49
Sherri Rosalik, Superintendent

March 13, 2020

Dear Palominas District Families,

As we move into Spring Break, I'd like to update you on our emergency preparedness planning regarding COVID-19. At this time, there are no documented cases of COVID-19 in Cochise County. As a district, we are following all available guidance from Health Department officials, the governor's office, and the Department of Education to work together to help mitigate the spread of the virus and to prepare our school sites for any potential closures.

Our Leadership Team has been hard at work developing preliminary plans in the event of mandated school closures. We are looking at how we would continue site operations, student instruction and nutrition. We have a team developing plans for food distribution to our eligible students. I have also been investigating how a closure would impact our classified staff, our budget, and our accountability at the state and federal level.

On March 12th I participated in a conference call between school superintendents, Governor Ducey, State Superintendent Hoffman, and AZ Dept of Health Director, Dr. Cara Christ. It was a very informative and helpful discussion. The 90-minute discussion was recorded and can be accessed via a link on this webpage:

<https://azgovernor.gov/governor/news/2020/03/governor-ducey-superintendent-hoffman-dr-cara-christ-share-covid-19-update>

My take-aways from the discussion are:

- The governor and state superintendent are working closely with the Health Department to monitor the community spread of this virus.
- At this time they are **not recommending any school closures** or cancellation of school sponsored activities (this recommendation could change at any time if the instances of community spread increases).

"We strive to be the heart of our community".

- The Department of Education is asking schools to excuse all absences related to illness.
- We are being ensured that our funding will not be impacted due to lower attendance or a mandated school closure.
- The ADE is working with the Attorney General's office to be as flexible as possible with required instructional minutes in the event of a school closure.
- The US Dept. of Agriculture is allowing schools that have the Summer Food Service Program to serve reimbursable meals in the event of a school closure.

The AZ Dept. of Ed has also developed some guidance for schools in a document that can be found on the Department of Education website (<https://www.azed.gov/>)

Because COVID-19 is a virus, this is a good time to review preventative measures that we can all take to avoid the spread of respiratory and other viruses.

- Keep your child(ren) home when they experience a fever, or while they are exhibiting other signs of illness.
- Teach your children to always cover their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue and then throw that tissue into the trash.
- Remind children to wash their hands often with soap and water after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat. Hand-washing strategies include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Tell children to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, including (but not limited to): door handles, refrigerator doors, phones, remote controls, keyboards, etc.

Previously, it was recommended that students who have a fever stay home until they have been free of fever over 100°F. It is now recommended that students remain home until they are clear of any symptoms of flu or respiratory illness, including fever, coughing, and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.

We will continue to follow the direction of the Cochise County Department of Health. regarding school closures. At this time, there are no recommendations for school closures or cancelation of school events in Cochise County. However, if your student or someone in your home is considered to be in an at-risk category, you should make a risk assessment and decision based on guidance from your own health care providers.

Students will not be penalized for an absence from school. Additionally, in order to avoid overwhelming the healthcare system, Palominas District schools will not require a doctor's note to return to school. We ask that you carefully follow your healthcare provider's recommendations.

It is recommended that parents develop contingency plans should their children become sick and need to stay home. Families may need to develop support systems when childcare is needed. Please keep in mind that older adults are considered to be in a high-risk category and may not be the preferred choice for childcare support in this context.

We remain in close contact with county and state health officials regarding this rapidly changing situation. As we receive updates that affect our school community, we will share them with you.

Please have a relaxing, healthy Spring Break! Keep washing those hands!

All my best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sherri Rosalik', is displayed within a light blue rectangular border.

Sherri Rosalik, Superintendent

“We strive to be the heart of our community”.