



Family Information Related to COVID-19 and School Closures Bulletin #2 - March 16, 2020

Dear Whitnall Families:

Today, the Department of Public Instruction shared information about waivers on instructional minutes and federal academic testing. More to be shared as we fully understand this information. It is likely that the amount of time we are away from school will be extended. Educational resources will be shared with families in the upcoming days. A plan for continuation of learning is also being developed.

In this bulletin we've included information about addressing mental health needs related to news about the coronavirus and its impact on daily routines and events. We know that some of the social distancing and isolation may be more challenging for some students. Each of the building principals has created a short video message we are asking that you share with your child. Seeing a familiar face, especially for our younger learners, is an important consideration in reducing anxiety.

We will continue to share information we receive and process as it impacts Whitnall families.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa L. Olson".

Lisa L. Olson, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Video Messages from Principals

[WHS - Mr. Tollefsen & Mr. Tillmann](#)

[WMS - Mr. Antholine & Mr. Relich](#)

[EES - Mr. D'Acquisto](#)

[HCE - Mrs. Komas](#)

The Connect

Please note that, while our schools are closed and while we continue these bulletins, we will suspend the Connect, our weekly parent newsletter. As you are aware, the Connect primarily features reminders about upcoming events and school day activities. Since these things are not taking place, it does not make sense to send the Connect. All critical district information will be shared in these bulletins instead.

Meal and Snack Pick-Up - Update

During the weeks of March 16-20 and March 30-April 3, Whitnall School District will provide one free meal and one free snack per day to each Whitnall child under the following criteria. Please reference Bulletin #1 for more details. You can still pick up meals even if you did not sign up. Unless the volume of meals increases dramatically, we will be having meal and snack pick-up only at Whitnall High School Main Entrance starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

Students with Disabilities

The Department of Education has ongoing efforts to assist students, teachers, and education leaders as part of the Administration's unprecedented, whole-of-government response to the viral outbreak. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos issued new resources on March 12, 2020, that will assist in [ensuring students with disabilities continue to receive services](#) required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for school closures due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

During the week of March 16, Whitnall students are not required to engage in any type of instruction. This includes students with disabilities and, therefore, services from the school district are not required.

As the district plans for the week of March 30 we are considering how to meet the needs of all of our learners and will likely need to create individual plans for each student with an IEP or 504 plan. One the extended closure has come to an end, IEP teams will review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students eligible for special education.

How to Address Mental Health Needs

As we are hearing more about how to stay physically safe from coronavirus and other illnesses, we would like to address the mental health needs that you may be seeing or feeling surrounding this topic.

The constant conversations and media coverage can be distracting and overwhelming. You may notice a wide range of reactions to what is being reported, from excitement to potential changes in schedules to fear and anxiety of the unknown. Here are some common recommendations to follow:

- Allow room for questions
- Stick to facts
- Allow time away from the topic by limiting access to news coverage/conversations
- Continue to follow normal routines
- Focus on what can be controlled (i.e. social distancing, hand washing)
- Model self-care (eat healthy meals, sleep well, exercise and take deep breaths to handle stress)
- Encourage positive activities
- Let students know who, when and where they can go if they need to talk or need a break
- Listen and validate feelings

The links below will provide more detailed information for staff, students and families.

For Caregivers, Parents, and Staff:

[Dr. Ken Ginsburg Podcast](#)

[Talking to Children about COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) A Parent Resource](#)

[SAMSHA Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)

[Social Distancing During School Closures](#)

For Students:

[Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#)

[Coronavirus Student Guide: Virus Explainer and News Updates](#)

Student Family Assistance Program

Whitnall's Student Family Assistance Program (SFAP) remains available to provide emotional support to our students and their families. In order to follow the state and federal healthcare guidelines, SFAP services will be provided telephonically and/or through webinars/conference calls through the end of March. More information on SFAP and how to access assistance can be found on our [website](#).