



# Nebraska City Public Schools

[www.nebcityps.org](http://www.nebcityps.org)

Office of the Superintendent

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LOURDES CENTRAL CATHOLIC  
A CATHOLIC LIFE PREPARATORY SCHOOL



March 12, 2020

Dear Nebraska City School Families,

Nebraska City Public Schools, Lourdes Central Catholic, and Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired continue to collaborate with our local health agency, Southeast District Health Department (SEDHD), as well with the Nebraska Department of Education to get timely updates, information, and guidance on COVID-19. We have ramped up cleaning and disinfecting routines; teachers and staff members are adding instruction and emphasis on typical precautions for any illness such as personal hygiene and general cleanliness.

As a general reminder, all health agencies are emphasizing **safe practices and precautions** to slow the spread of COVID-19 and other typical cold and flu viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue (or sleeve), and throw the tissue away.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (shared work areas, counters, railings, lighting switches, door knobs, handrails, etc..) using a disinfectant spray or wipe. To the greatest extent possible, telephones should not be shared.
- **Stay home if you are sick.** Students must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours, without fever reducing medications. If your child shows symptoms of illness at school, we will keep the student isolated and will then request parents to make arrangements to pick them up as soon as possible. We are required to document symptoms and strongly encourage parents to follow up with medical care and a visit to the doctor's office.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Take care of your health overall. Staying current on your vaccinations, including the flu vaccine, eating well, and exercising all help your body stay resistant to disease.

Much information has been released over the past few days about COVID-19 with regard to school closings. Decisions about closing school will be made by regional health departments (SEDHD for DHHS) in collaboration with the schools. The general directive at this time is that schools in a community will be required to close if two (2) confirmed cases of community spread occur. "Community spread/transmission" is described as cases in the same community that **are not directly** linked to each other. Of course, the size of the community does play a part in the decision. Health agencies may also recommend closing school should one confirmed case be reported in a community based on the investigation, subsequent patient tracking, and contacts of the person involved. In either case, the **decision to close will be made by health agencies in collaboration with the local schools.**

Closing schools in relation to a confirmed case(s) is mandatory, but some schools are also closing in an attempt to slow the virus when timing (such as the week before or after a spring break) makes it more conducive to do so. Any decision to close absent a confirmed case is also made in collaboration with SEDHD, but basically is the responsibility of the individual school. For NCPS, Lourdes, and NCECBVI, we are planning to hold school as regularly scheduled, and any decision to close will be made in collaboration with SEDHD based on known, factual information. At this time, school activities and events will proceed as regularly scheduled. However, the final determination for any activity and event cancellation/postponement will be made on a case-by-case basis, possibly with minimal notice.

According to the Commissioner of Education, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) may allow schools flexibility meeting certain statutes and rules governing instructional time, services and maintenance of effort for special needs children, OT/PT/SLP services, and other mandates should schools be forced to close for a short time, or for longer periods. A major part of those discussions involve providing instruction during school closures. The concept of instruction through online access, or "eLearning", seems to be the most popular. However, for many schools, including NCPS, there are challenges with that model: family wi-fi access, device availability, etc... Building administrators are discussing ideas and options for instruction with teachers with the intent of having a basic plan in place should we need to close.

We want to emphasize that given so many unknown factors of the disease and with the prevalent speed of the spread, that anything is possible and no "playbook for schools" exists. In addition to being a new strain, changes in the scope of the spread and the science of COVID-19 are happening in hourly increments. The impact of the virus may force our local schools and families to create a Plan B, Plan C, Plan D at a moments notice based on all the variables of the situation. Knowing that decisions will be made quickly and at almost anytime, it is important for families to be prepared to make adjustments quickly if a school closure should be required.

Nebraska City Public Schools, Lourdes and NCECBVI will continue to seek guidance from our health agency partners as they are the subject matter experts, and their professional networks and expertise will help guide us through the viral outbreak. We will provide further updates as decisions are made, if pertinent information is released from state agencies, or if school or community status levels demand immediate notification.

Sincerely,

Rex Pfeil, Superintendent  
Nebraska City Public Schools

Fr. Jonathan Haschke, CAO  
Lourdes Central Catholic School

Sally Schreiner, Administrator  
NCECBVI