

## Temporary Building Closure:

Dear Mat-Su Families and Staff,

I am reaching out to you with an update regarding temporary building closures necessitated by the COVID-19 virus. First, I want to thank parents for your continued support and the grace you have afforded the district while we have tried to manage this pandemic. Second, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all of the staff, particularly those working directly with students, for your heroic efforts to keep schools open. Your work on behalf of Mat-Su students speaks to your dedication as educators. Also, I want to personally thank the committed team of professionals with Mat-Su Public Health whose contact tracing efforts and advice have made it possible to keep schools open for over 90% of the year so far! Thank you all for everything you have done and continue to do for our students.

As you know the recent surge in COVID-19 cases has impacted our schools. Some schools have needed to be shut down more frequently and for longer time periods. These increases in infections have impacted families, staff and our partners in Public Health. As the virus has spread across the Valley, schools have needed to close because of a lack of staff and/or substitutes available to teach and care for students, as well as the ability of our partners in Public Health to complete contact tracing due to the increased volume of new cases.

Despite these challenges, our partners in Public Health maintain that the mitigation strategies in place in MSBSD make school one of the safest spots for children in the Valley, but the impacts on staff and community health professionals are real. Therefore, in view of the increase in infection rate, the impacts of that increase on the availability of staff, and the ability to complete contact tracing we asked ourselves “What can we do to keep schools open for the long term so students can continue to spend time in one of the safest spots in the Valley?”

**Our answer is that the school buildings in the Mat-Su will transition to At-Home learning for Monday, November 23rd through Wednesday, November 25th with all schools scheduled to reopen for in-person learning on Monday, November 30th.** This closure will allow:

- Public Health officials time to complete contact tracing of current cases.
- Public Health officials time to train District nurses in contact tracing so they can assist in these efforts going forward.
- School staff to update school level mitigation plans that reflect what we have learned about operating a school during this pandemic.
- Currently impacted students and staff time to complete their quarantines and be available to return to in-person learning.
- First Student time to reinforce and review mitigation strategies on bus routes.

We recognize that all school building closures are impactful to students and their families. We are taking this action in an effort to increase our abilities to keep schools open going into the future. To quote the old adage, "A stitch in time saves nine."

During this break from in-person learning the district joins community health and our Governor in asking you each for your support in keeping schools open for students. If all of us practice mask wearing, social distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and proper hand hygiene we can continue to be one of the largest school districts on the West Coast to offer At-School learning.

I want to end where I started with my heartfelt thanks to families for the grace you have afforded us and trust you have placed in us to care for your children. I want to thank our Public Health partners for their endless dedication to keeping schools open. And, most importantly, I want to thank all the staff for their heroic work this year; your commitment to children is inspirational. Thank you, thank you.

Yours in education,

Randy Trani, Ed.D., MSBSD Superintendent

P.S. Additional information regarding Grab n' Go meal pick-up during the short-term building closure will be released on 11/20/2020.