

Dear Staff and Community,

Now that the Governor made her announcement that all public and private schools would be closed for the remainder of the school year, let me explain what that will look like. It does not mean that Belle Plaine Schools will cease to teach your students, but it will have to operate differently. I just heard a reporter say that the Governor closed schools, but she did not cancel them. Here at Belle Plaine Schools, we will take this week and all of next week to finish cleaning. During that time we will also meet with our staff (possibly virtually) and brainstorm what this new style of learning will look like. We will submit a request for a waiver of the 1,116 hours that students are required to have for a school year to count, and, I believe, part of that request will include an outline of the plan we create to finish the school year and minimize the learning gap that this absence has the potential to create. We will more than likely have students utilize our computers, and we will probably provide some on-line instruction. It may even involve some small group person-to-person instruction, if that is approved as an acceptable option. The Governor did make that an option provided the groups were not more than ten in number.

Finally, part of the waiver will include the assurance that those who have been hired to work for the year will continue to be employed. As long as our employees are willing to be reasonably flexible about their responsibilities, they can continue to expect a paycheck through the remainder of the school year --- that's all employees, certified and classified.

This will be different and challenging, both in the creation of the plan and the incorporation of it for students. But we will come through this stronger. I am very confident that all of our staff will roll up their sleeves and make this work. Questions are welcome and will be answered as quickly as I can get to them.

Sincerely,
James Sutton