

Bethel Public Schools

36000 Clear Pond Road
Shawnee, OK 74801
(405) 273-0385
Fax: (405) 273-5056

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Greetings,

Bethel Public Schools is and will always be a great place for kids. Students are our main priority. Our current situation is one that could not have even been imagined a month ago. Information overload is the norm. Our state department of education is guiding districts with current factual information, as it is available. That information will be shared with you as it becomes available. There will be a Frequent Question and Answer sheet posted on this website that will be updated as needed.

As we all become well acquainted with the term “social distancing,” there are some interesting observations being made. First and foremost, this term is **VERY** difficult for teachers. Our lives literally revolve around being with your kids, our students. We miss our students and care for them deeply. We worry about them and their families during this time. We feel responsible for the learning our students will miss. Another thought has been raised about how we are utilizing something that had previously been creating “social distancing” among us. It is now being used as a way to decrease the current distancing. Technology and social media have been the culprit in a “social distancing” problem for some time. Our screen time has gotten in the way of important social interaction and personal relationships. This mandated “social distancing” is proving to be a wakeup call about the importance of meaningful interaction with each other and those who are important to us. Social media and face time experiences have become more meaningful and genuine it seems as a way to meet this internal need we all have. Free concerts from the homes of famous performers, families and friends holding interactive conversations/parties online and teachers reaching out to their students are just a few examples. (Check out the video from our Lower Elementary teachers on their FaceBook site.) Could this be an unforeseen opportunity to learn?

Learning is realized in almost every situation we are in. How we utilize that learning is up to us. For teachers, it is ALL about learning. How we use this acquired learning during the break will be important. While it is different from traditional school learning, it is nonetheless important to our “school learning” process. This will be a topic of many teacher discussions in the very near future. Please be assured that any possible lost instruction during this time off will be addressed and made up along the way as we return to normal. The timing and method of that process will have many faces across this country, state and even our county, but it will happen.

The loss of educational experiences that are perceived as necessary and normal is going to happen. This will become clearer as more details become available and future decisions are made at the state and federal levels. This is not a normal situation and we predict it to not be a normal finish to the school year in many ways. The necessary limits on the gathering of people are requiring schools to look at creative ways to save normal events. It is fair to say that many events could be officially cancelled. That is not our wish, but the reality of the situation. We will work diligently to come up with creative ways to save as many as possible.

We received approval for a grab-and-go feeding program over the weekend. The plan will be to set up a drive-thru service next to the upper cafeteria, from 8:00-10:00, M-F, each week. To receive

these meals you will enter the high school parking lot on the west end of the cafeteria. **PLEASE DO NOT GET OUT OF YOUR CAR.** Someone will come to your car and provide you with the meals. The students receiving the meals **MUST** be in the car. This is per federal guidelines. Breakfast and lunch will be in one bag.

State testing and the annual school report card have been officially cancelled. The approval from the U.S. Department of Education was received this week. This decision was absolutely made in the best interest of our students and teachers.

We will be staffing the schools with essential employees only for now. The hours will be Tuesday thru Thursday from 9:00-12:00 at the board office only. All sites will remain locked down. All in person visits will be by appointment only. Arrangements to pick up any student medication must be made by calling first. There will be essential employees working off and on at the building sites but they will not be available for contact. The only addition to this during the shutdown will be our cafeteria grab-and-go service once approved.

While we are unable to predict what the future brings, we believe it is safe to say that there could be an extension of this break past April 6th. Schools have been asked to prepare for this possibility by our state school superintendent. More clarification should be available sometime this week. Bethel will move forward and address the future of this school year according to the state department of education's direction. Our state superintendent said it best in her last conference call with district superintendents, "Do what is right." Whatever situation or circumstance is presented to Bethel Schools will be done in the spirit of "what is right" for our all of our students.

While it is very easy to be overcome with the words panic, pandemic and fear, we should remember that these circumstances are temporary. We have the ability to make our own good choices. Understanding is necessary. Empathy is required. Learning continues at home, value that. School learning will come, teachers will make sure of it. Carpe Diem comes to mind. Seize the day. Make the most of the situation you are in. Play outside with your kids. Cook with them. Face time with relatives and friends. Find someone in need and go to the grocery store for him or her. Check on your neighbors. We are all in this together which might turn into one of the biggest blessings of our lives.

Stay safe and wash your hands,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tod Harrison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tod Harrison
Superintendent
Bethel Public Schools