

Independence Unified School District 446

COVID-19 Coronavirus Update

Today we live in a global society which offers our community immediate access to many wonderful things from all parts of the world and unfortunately, that access comes with potential health risk such as COVID-19 commonly known as the Coronavirus. Our district is closely working with the Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas Department of Health and Environment to help prevent this virus from entering our schools and seeking the best ways to move forward safely educating our children should it enter our schools and community. In addition, the district continues to work closely with area schools and local health agencies as we create contingency plans and next steps to be taken within our district in case of an outbreak. The health and safety of our students, staff, and community remain our top priority as we continue to monitor COVID-19.

The Kansas State Department of Education conducted a statewide webinar March 12, 2020, to communicate general guidance for schools and provide resources to obtain current and factual information concerning COVID-19.

General Guidelines:

1. The Montgomery County Health Department monitors the health and health risks in our local community and has the authority to close school buildings. The district **does not** have the authority to close school buildings for a health crisis. Our district will follow the direction of the Montgomery County Health Department.
2. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recommends any schools with staff or students who have traveled to known “hot spots” for COVID-19 or outside of the United States as of Feb. 25, 2020, and until all travel bans are lifted, check in with the Montgomery County Health Department about their travel history and follow their guidance regarding isolation or quarantine measures. The district **does not** have the authority to isolate or quarantine anyone.
NOTE: If your family travels to an affected area during Spring Break, please contact the Montgomery County Health Department for recommendations on a health screening before attending school.
3. If the Montgomery County Health Department, in cooperation with Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the President of the United States or the Kansas governor, requires the closure of a school because of COVID-19, schools will have three options:
 1. Make up the missed school days by June 30, 2020.
 2. Submit a proposal to KSDE for the delivery of e-learning to be counted as seat time.
 3. Submit a petition to the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas Commissioner of Education to waive the legally required minimum number of hours and days schools must be in session.

Should our district be closed for an extended period of time we will utilize a combination of options 1 and 3 as all of our students do not have access to the technology required to implement option 2.

NOTE: If a local school district decides independently (without the recommendation of KDHE and the local health department, the President or the Governor) to close schools, the schools would be required to make up all time by June 30, 2020.

4. The Kansas Department of Education has received approval of two waivers from the USDA Food & Nutrition Services (FNS). Specifically, they have waived the requirements to serve meals in a congregate setting and to serve meals at a non-school site for COVID-19 related SFSP or SSO meal service operations. The District is currently developing a safe plan to provide meals for our students should our buildings be ordered closed.
5. The Kansas Department of Education has stated that attendance statutes remain in effect. The district currently monitors attendance on a daily basis and will continue these practices along with reporting attendance data to the Montgomery County Health Department when absences reach a certain threshold. Attendance reminders:
 - Parents should continue to contact their child's school to report absences.
 - Parents may opt to keep their children home for health and safety reasons.
 - In the case of excused absences, schoolwork will be made up according to teacher and/or building policies.
 - Please help to keep our students and staff safe by practicing good hygiene and staying home if they have been running a fever or are exhibiting signs of a fever.
6. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The CDC recommends the following preventative actions:
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
 - 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 if your hands are visibly dirty.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on protecting yourself and your family as updated.

Spring Break has granted the district time to prepare as best we can for school to resume and we would like to share some of those efforts with you. Below, you will find some of the work that has been done and will continue in order to protect our students, staff, schools, and community against a potential outbreak. Our district is committed to the health and safety of our students and staff.

- Communication—we will communicate and update information as it becomes available to the district utilizing multiple forms of communication at our disposal; this is a rapidly evolving situation. Information will be updated by the district, health departments,

education departments, and state and federal agencies so please use the Resource Links provided below to keep informed.

- Deep Cleaning and Sanitizing—this is ongoing within our schools and buses.
 - If a school becomes contaminated, the custodial staff will disinfect and sterilize all surface area before re-entry.
 - Our buses are sanitized weekly utilizing electrostatic sprayers.
- School Trips and Activities— School officials will work closely with trip and activity partners to determine the safety and risks for potential school trips. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Lunch Program—Breakfast and lunch will continue to be served in the case of an ordered shutdown. Please check our website for updates to our lunch program and service locations.
- Hand Washing— each school will adjust schedules to allow more time for all students to thoroughly wash hands before lunch and snack times; this will be modified to include supervised hand washing as needed.
- Illness Response—each school will identify a designated (isolation) room to use if a student or staff member is showing signs of illness related to COVID-19. The school will work with parents and local health agencies to respond appropriately.

At the time of this writing there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kansas Public Schools. Independence Unified School District 446 is committed to the health and safety of our students and staff. Please help to keep our students and staff safe by staying informed, practicing good hygiene, and staying home or keeping children home if they have been running a fever or are exhibiting signs of a fever. We must all take necessary precautions, remain vigilant, don't panic and as always, don't believe everything you read on Facebook and other social media sites.

Rusty A, Arnold, Superintendent of Schools

Resource Links:

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

www.kdheks.gov.

Montgomery Health Department

<http://mgcountyks.org/>

Kansas State Department of Education

<https://www.ksde.org/>

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www.indyschools.com