

March 15, 2020

Merced County School Communities,

As a precautionary step to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and in consultation with Merced County school district leaders and health officials, we are supporting a suspension of school operations in Merced County effective Thursday, March 19 through Friday, April 17. By closing effective Thursday, this gives our families time to make arrangements for child care. We plan to reopen on April 20, but that decision will depend on the circumstances at the time.

This is not a decision we take lightly. We know that temporarily closing a school has a tremendous impact on our families. The safety of our students and staff remains our top priority, and we have confidence that this is the proper precautionary course for Merced County. We are working with all of our local education agencies to support the continuity of learning and to ensure students have access to healthy meals.

Public health officials recommend that families make arrangements for child care during closure that avoids leaving children with elderly or those with compromised immune systems who are more vulnerable to the impact of the virus.

This is a dynamic situation where information and circumstances can evolve quickly. For the latest updates, visit the California Public Health Department's 2019 novel coronavirus website at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019> and for local health updates visit the Merced County Health Department's 2019 novel coronavirus website at: <https://countyofmerced.com/coronavirus>.

We also understand that implementing these changes with such limited notice is challenging and disruptive, and we appreciate your patience and cooperation. We are grateful to community members throughout Merced County for their tremendous prevention efforts during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Steve Tietjen, Ed.D., Merced County Superintendent of Schools
Sandra Schiber, Ed.D., Atwater Elementary School District
Bliss Propes, Ballico-Cressey Elementary School District
Adolfo Melara, Delhi Unified School District
Justin Miller, Ed.D., Dos Palos-Oro Loma Joint Unified School District
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Bryan Ballenger, Ed.D., Gustine Unified School District
Isabel Cabral-Johnson, Hilmar Unified School District
Scott M. Borba, Le Grand Union Elementary School District
Donna Alley, Le Grand Union High School District
Andres Zamora, Livingston Union School District
Mark Marshall, Ed.D., Los Banos Unified School District
Mike Crass, McSwain Union Elementary School District
Al Rogers, Ed.D., Merced City School District
Richard Lopez, Merced River Union Elementary School District
Alan Peterson, Merced Union High School District
Kristi Kingston, Plainsburg Union Elementary School District

Jose Gonzalez, Planada Elementary School District
Alison Kahl, Snelling-Merced Falls Union Elementary School District
John Curry, Weaver Union School District
Randall Heller, Winton Elementary School District