

March 14, 2020

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff,

I am writing to continue to update you on Lamoille North's prevention and preparedness related to COVID-19 and to review with you the most recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and information provided by Governor Scott's press conference.

First, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has expanded their guidance regarding school closures and dismissal. [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs](#) maintains that school closures are not recommended for communities such as ours where there is no community transmission and no cases within the school community. Please note that the Vermont Department of Health (VT DOH) will notify me immediately in the event there is reason to suspect that we have COVID-19 in our school(s). Governor Scott also affirmed last evening that closing K-12 schools is not recommended or required at this time. We continue to constantly monitor developments. Decisions about school closure or dismissal will be made in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health and Agency of Education and per guidance from these agencies and the CDC.

Please read [Governor Scott's Declaration of State of Emergency](#). Of particular interest are the following orders as they relate to schools. He orders:

***“ While many are concerned about the welfare of their children in the pre-K-through-12 schools, suspension of school at this time is not recommended by the Commissioner of Health as of the date of this Order. The Secretary of Education is hereby directed to develop a contingency plan for school closings necessitated by COVID-19 for such time as this may be recommended by VDH and VEM”.***

***“ I hereby direct that no school superintendent or school board shall cause a student or parent to be penalized for student absences that are the result of following medical advice or the guidance of VDH or arising from the concerns of parents or guardians relating to COVID-19”.***

Here is the link to the [press conference video](#) as posted by VTDigger.

Please note that decisions about statewide school closures could change day-to-day and it is important to continue to plan for such a decision should it be directed by the joint Health Commissioner (VT DOH)/ Secretary of Education (VT

AOE). Schools are preparing for all scenarios and I urge families to plan accordingly.

We continue to take actions for prevention and preparedness:

1. All **in state** field trips will be postponed or cancelled effective Monday, March 16. All **out of state** field trips are cancelled for the remainder of the school year.
2. All **community use of school facilities** will be postponed or cancelled effective Monday, March 16.
3. All **school** group gatherings will be reviewed early next week and modified, postponed, or cancelled, including events such as assemblies and performances. Changes, postponements, and cancellations will be communicated promptly from **each school** as appropriate.
4. Food service operations are continually being updated. Hand sanitizer is available at the beginning and end of meal service. We are exploring options for “to go” meals. We have increased sanitizing other high-touch surfaces in our dining and food service areas.
5. Board Meetings will continue on a regular basis and remote attendance will be made available to members who choose to call in to the meeting.

I know that many of you continue to have questions about school closure. While school closure is not recommended at this time, we are continuing to prepare in the event it is needed. Guidance differentiates between two options: closure and dismissal. **School closure** means closing a school and sending all the students and employees home. **School dismissal** means that a school might stay open for employees while the children stay home. Keeping facilities open during a dismissal allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely to maintain continuity of teaching and learning, and allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts. Our faculty and staff are working hard to prepare for school dismissal. Please join me in extending appreciation and support for their ongoing work to prepare while ensuring our schools promote safety and health and keep learning on track.

All members of our community can help to prepare in the event school closure or dismissal is directed, and are encouraged to review the [CDC's resources regarding preparation](#). Again, no decisions regarding school closure and dismissal have been made and will only be made upon the advice or direction of the Commissioner of Health and Secretary of Education.

If you have questions about your health, please contact your medical provider and if appropriate, the Vermont Department of Health (VT DOH) at (802) 863-7240.

We will continue to provide updates to our Lamoille North communities as new information is available. Thank you for continuing to work and plan together and for supporting one another during this fluid and changing situation.

My very best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Lamoille North Supervisory Union