



April 23, 2020

Dear Warrior Families,

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Walz's subsequent executive orders have created the need for all Minnesota school districts to embrace and implement an equitable distance learning model for all students. Since March 15, 2020, Brainerd Public School District educators have worked tirelessly to provide a strategic direction for distance learning, update educational resources and supply the structure needed to meet this challenge. Together, we have developed and put forth a distance learning plan, implemented virtual learning, provided child care for families of our emergency workers and staff, and prepared/served nutritious meals for children up to age 18.

Educators were asked to meet the needs of Minnesota's children, families and communities and have admirably taken on this challenge with integrity, patience and grit. I could not be more proud of the commendable work our staff have delivered! Since our last communication, changes have taken place about which I would like to give you an update:

Distance Learning Period Extension: Overwhelmingly, I have heard positive responses from teachers, parents and students regarding the education, relationship-building and social interaction that has occurred since we began distance learning on March 30, 2020. It has taken an army of committed people to strategically plan and support this endeavor. As a result of the enormous efforts put forth, our students have equitable access to technology, distance learning and regular communication with their teacher.

During distance learning, I frequently hear, "Teachers miss their students! Students miss their teachers and friends!" These sentiments make it even more heartbreaking to share today's announcement from Governor Walz and MDE Commissioner Ricker, "*the Distance Learning Period will extend for the rest of the 2019-20 school year.*" Students will not return to their school buildings for education this spring. This was difficult news for all of us; however, we understand the first priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of our students and staff. Together, we remain strong and continue to provide high quality instruction for all. Distance learning at ISD 181 will continue through the scheduled end of our school year on May 22, 2020. As previously scheduled, there will be no distance learning on Friday, May 1 and Monday, May 4, 2020. Teachers will use these days to plan for the remainder of the school year. Our emergency child care sites will remain open on these days for participating families.

"Stay at Home" Executive Order Extension: On March 25, 2020 Governor Walz announced an executive order for Minnesotans to, "Stay at Home." This order was put in effect to give us time to plan and prepare medical facilities/supplies for Minnesota's pandemic peak. To further preserve safety and well-being, on Wednesday, April 8, 2020 Governor Walz extended this stay at home order until Monday, May 4, 2020. Social distancing, as implemented by Minnesotans, is flattening the curve of the trend line of new infections at a faster rate than other states; therefore, we want to continue preparations and we do not want to let up too early. This extension allows MN time to obtain the resources necessary for testing and to respond to our pandemic peak, which they believe is moving towards June/July. For the continued health and protection please follow the safety orders set forth by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Meals for Children 18 Years Old & Under: Throughout the remainder of the school year closure, ISD 181 will continue to offer "grab and go meals" between the hours of 11a.m. and 12:30p.m., weekdays, at Forestview Middle School, Washington Educational Services Building and Garfield Elementary School. All students, ages 18 and under, are eligible for daily meals.

Emergency Child Care: We will continue to offer emergency child care to the children of emergency and critical professionals, Monday through Friday, 7a.m. to 5p.m., for the duration of the May school closure. If your family develops a need for this service and qualifies as emergency/critical employees, please contact us through the Family Needs Survey on the district homepage at isd181.org. Please note that this is being offered only to families who qualify, who have no other child care options, so that the critical and essential employees may continue to work.

Health, Wellness & Safety Measures: You have most likely seen the media coverage regarding probable safety measures to increase personal health and wellness. Guidance from the CDC and MDH encourage essential health protections. Brainerd Public Schools have received masks for site workers those who wish to use them. At this time, masks are not required but are available for employees at the district childcare and meal pick-up sites. The homemade masks will help prevent you from giving germs or a virus to another person but does not prevent you from getting COVID-19. Primary and essential protections include: washing your hands often; covering your coughs and sneezes; and social distancing - even as the days become warm and beautiful!

End of Year Traditions: Spring is a special time at Brainerd Public Schools, as it is filled with our best traditions and rites of passage. From Kinder Friend Day to field day, from Senior Awards Banquets to Graduation, this is usually a joyful and busy time. As Andrea Rusk, Brainerd High School Principal recently told the Board of Education, “we are taking the time to be hopeful and to pause,” while finding alternate schedules and/or formats to observe and celebrate our student’s prestigious accomplishments. The district will communicate plans and updates as soon as details are finalized, through our district website, social media and local communication avenues.

Board of Education Meeting: On behalf of the Board of Education, we thank each of you for your support, engagement and loyalty to ISD 181! For your information, we want to let you know that the next board meeting(s) will be using a remote meeting process. Due to current federal, state and local peacetime emergency declarations, the Minnesota directive to residents to stay at home, and guidance about limiting person-to-person contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the next regular board meeting will be conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 13D.021 - Meetings by Telephone or Other Electronic Means. Persons monitoring these meetings from a remote location may submit a comment to communication@isd181.org during the public input portion of the meeting.

Blueprint181 Construction Update: I am frequently asked about the status of our Blueprint181 construction projects. District employees, ICS representatives and contracted staff are working together to determine multiple pathways and plans as the COVID-19 situation and executive orders are announced. Pre-pandemic construction timelines had the majority of our remodeling of existing school spaces beginning on May 28, 2020. Because of today’s news, it is in our best interest to start construction on the existing school spaces early to allow us extra time should construction labor and/or supplies be impacted by this virus. It is heart-warming to see our contractors, approximately 70% of whom are local, working together to provide the absolute best learning environment for our students, staff and community!

As Superintendent of Schools, it is my honor to extend the oversight and support needed to ensure that our district provides opportunity, innovation, equity and success for all learners. Working together to ensure educational excellence, our teachers, paraprofessionals, food service workers, administration, technology, building and grounds, transportation, support staff, business/district offices teams, Board of Education, and health care and emergency workers, in partnership with our community, have rallied together to be there for our children and families. As quoted, “Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much. United, we can accomplish wonders!” Thank you for all you do at Brainerd Public Schools. You are not just my friends, community partners and colleagues...you are my Warrior Family! Please stay safe and healthy.

Respectfully,



Laine D. Larson, Superintendent of Schools
Brainerd Public Schools