

COVID-19 Mitigation Procedures

March 14, 2020

SCCS Parents and Community:

To say that this past week has been surreal would be an understatement.

We are working through unprecedented situations and doing our very best to make wise yet proactive decisions. We remain firm in our belief that God's got this. We choose faith over fear, but do not want to be foolish; we will do what we can using information we are given to make effective plans.

Connecting with Leaders and Agencies

We continue to stay connected to area leaders, including the Sioux Center School District, and state and local health agencies so that we can partner in our efforts regarding COVID-19. Mrs. Mouw and I have been working directly with the board of trustees to make these decisions.

We Need Your Help

We want to prevent the spread of all illness, especially in this period of heightened awareness. We need parents to help with this situation by doing the following:

- Abide by the rule of keeping students home when they have a fever or are not well; students with a fever need to be fever-free for 24 hours unmedicated before returning to school.
- All students and families who have traveled or are planning to travel within – and/or outside – the United States should review the information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 - Upon return from travel within the United States, parents/guardians and staff members should contact the Iowa Department of Public Health for guidance before readmission to school.
 - Upon return from travel outside of the United States:
 - If travel was to a sustained or widespread (ongoing) community spread country, Level 2 or 3 country:
 - You are required to stay home and limit interactions with others for 14 days.
 - You should contact public health officials for further assessment and monitoring.
- Any absences due to self-isolation will be considered excused absences.
- We encourage you to do what you can to create social distance by not participating in non-essential events or gatherings outside of school hours.
- Students should bring books back to school, and we will continue transporting them back and forth as needed.
- These steps may sound simple, but, according to the public health experts, they are tried-and-true measures for all of us to take:
 - Cover your mouth with your upper arm or a tissue when coughing or sneezing
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Governor Recommendations

At this time, the governor has not recommended school closures. They have, however, issued guidance for schools, focused mainly on the chance of reducing exposure and spread. At SCCS, we will be working to implement measures that align with these guidelines.

Protocols We are Working to Put in Place

The protocols we need to put in place would have been unthinkable even as little as a week ago. Now they are essential to us doing our part to stop the spread of the virus. Also, a reminder that we do have plans in place should we need to provide an alternate learning situation for our students. We will put that plan in place should it be necessary.

We are currently receiving guidance from the state department of education and the Iowa Department of Health to put in place several mitigation practices.

We will start working on implementing these procedures as quickly as we can to get things in place as we begin this week. They will continue through Easter break, and we will make decisions on their continuation after Easter break.

The practices will include:

School Nurse and Hygiene

- Stacy Schaap, our school nurse, will be extending her hours. She will be monitoring students who are ill and sending home any students who have not stayed home for 24 hours fever-free without the assistance of medication.
- Students and employees will wash hands at the start of the day and will continue to be encouraged to practice vigilant hygiene behaviors like covering a cough, washing before eating, etc.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Faculty and staff have been trained in proper use of various cleaning supplies we have available and have been cleaning high-touch surfaces frequently. Sanitizing and cleaning efforts will be increased. Some staff will be reassigned to assist with these additional efforts. Hand sanitizer is available in each classroom, and sanitizing wipes and disinfecting materials are also available in each classroom and are used regularly, including on technology devices and frequently used learning materials.

School Day Adjustments

- Anyone who is not an SCCS employee, SCCS student, or student teacher will not be admitted into the building. Deliveries and drop-offs can still occur in the office, but no visitors will be allowed past that point. Unfortunately, this also includes parents, dish washers, Tuesday Ladies, classroom volunteers, library volunteers, and any other outside people.
- All substitute teaching needs will be covered in-house, with the exception of long-term maternity leave subs. Mrs. Mouw and I will be helping as much as possible. We also may need to get creative with paraprofessional use and other employee use in the building. Faculty and staff will be asked to cancel and/or reschedule any appointments as much as possible so that they can be in school.
- Students must wait outside before school starts, not in the entryways.
- All parent pick-up should occur outside the building or just inside the main entrance.
- We will not have chapel as a whole school. Alternate plans will be made, while still providing a rich worship experience for students.

- There will be no salad bar for lunch. Straws will be removed, and silverware will be prewrapped in a napkin and distributed by a lunch person to each child with their milk. Students will go back to their classrooms to eat lunch.
- Aftercare will continue as normal. Parents can pick up children outside of the aftercare building.
- All field trips are postponed and/or cancelled.
- All student travel to off-campus events is postponed and/or cancelled.
- Swimming is cancelled.
- It is unclear whether or not we will continue with SCCS athletic activities. Parents of student athletes will be informed within the next few days.
- The TRIP office will remain open at this point, due to its location at the entrance of the school.

Event Adjustments

- Any outside rentals will not be allowed to use the facility.
- Parent-teacher conferences will happen next week, March 24 and 25. You will keep your current time slot, but we will also make the sign-up sheets editable if you would like to make changes. All teachers will be connecting via phone or email with parents who have a scheduled conference. For students in grades TK-3, parents will receive a phone call from the teacher during their scheduled conference time. For students in grades 4-8, we will use the same method of parents getting a phone call from their teacher during their scheduled conference time, but we ask that students be present with their parents to participate during the call.
- The annual society meeting will be postponed. Be looking for a follow-up email concerning this event.
- The Spring PACE Business Meeting is postponed to a later date.
- The folk song celebration is postponed to a later date.
- Details regarding TK/K round up will be decided in the days ahead.
- We are postponing Trail'Raiser Night and the Celebration of Learning until April 25.

These actions may seem drastic to some, and some may not believe they are necessary. When dealing with a pandemic, the measures that will actually make a difference need to be taken sooner than we think. We are striving to provide the safest environment to all students and employees in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. We want to do our part to stop the spread so that we can be good neighbors to those who are most at risk of developing complications from the illness, ensuring that our healthcare system is able to meet the needs of those people, and we will continue to do that.

Stress and Anxiety

The uncertainty of this situation can create stress and anxiety. As a faculty and staff, we are trying to maintain as much normalcy as possible, speaking optimistically, and reassuring students. The National Association of School Psychologists has provided this resource for parents on how to talk with your children about COVID-19: [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource). We have also provided resources for teachers to talk with students at school, and we encourage you to talk with your children at home.

Your Decision as Parents

We understand that people in our school community are at many different points of the spectrum related to thoughts, feelings, and opinions about COVID-19. Some believe this is not a big deal, while others may prefer we would close school now. We honor and respect your decisions as a parent. If you choose to keep your children home and self-isolate, absences will be excused.

A Focus on Love

I encourage everyone to redirect any energy that might be focused on anxiety to love and preparation. We do not change our behavior out of fear. Love is the reason we are changing our behaviors and practices at school. It is not for self-protection; rather, it is to do what we can to protect our vulnerable neighbors. As Christians, we have been given an opportunity to love and care for our neighbors. Of course, we will witness and experience stress, but God is present in everything we will encounter. Jesus is present today and will be present tomorrow, which sets us free from worry. And we will continue to focus on love. We do what we can to prepare so that we can be free of anxieties and serve freely when the time comes.

May we rest in the words of Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 1:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own,
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to Him,
Christ, by His Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for Him.

May we embody and live out these words together.

Please stay tuned for further updates, as they could (and most likely will) be regular and often. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Thank you for being a faithful community.

Thank you for your understanding and assistance as we move through this difficult and ever-changing situation.

With you,

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