



Superintendent
725 West Colorado Avenue
Telluride, CO 81435
Phone: 970-728-6617
mgass@telluride.k12.co.us
www.TellurideSchool.org

TSD COVID-19 Update 3.13.20

School Buildings to close, learning to stay open and moving to online through spring break

Dear TSD Community,

Dear Parents,

Late yesterday San Miguel County Public Health issued some more definitive guidelines around the COVID-19. Among those guidelines were limitations to group size. In phone calls with local health experts I asked for greater clarity, and came away with an understanding of the what they believe is on the horizon is eminent. Also, last night I spoke with some of my trusted fellow superintendents in the front range seeking to understand the drivers that shut many schools in the metro area. Here is the take away, we have COVID-19 and it is at the front door of our community, if not already in our house. Knowing this along with the county guidance issued we have a moral duty to do the best we can to support our medical community as they deal with this event. The goal is to flatten the impact curve to not max the capacity of the regional and state health systems. That is best done with keeping people further apart and with less contact physically. **To be clear, I am making this decision with no known cases in San Miguel County.**

So what does that mean...

Telluride is one of the most adaptive and resilient communities I have been a part of in my education career. I believe we need to respect the issuance of the County and close school buildings – **not close learning... but close buildings**. I believe with our staff we can, within the next week, create a learning model for all students that will keep the momentum going and continue to help students be engaged.

Staff has been discussing how this might take place at all levels of the organization. Each grade level and situation will have unique challenges for sure but we will communicate and make staff available to help families to the best of our ability. The Board and I do not take this decision lightly as we know what this impact has on our community, workforce, and ability to care for others. I am encouraging employers to be flexible and pull together to create work environments that fill the void left by the traditional school day.

Staff will be working to bring resources and directed learning to families using Schoology, Zoom, or other platforms such as paper and pencil for students. If your family needs a device or access to the internet we will be providing options. If students all flock to Wilkinson it truly defeats the intent and would guess they will be restricting crowds as well. I will ask teachers to begin communication on Monday on what they are expecting and available.

We have some robust learning platforms and many of our partners have agreed to expand our subscriptions to aid in this process.

Buildings and classrooms will be accessible through the front offices if students or parents need to pick up materials or items left at school. Please look for posted hours at tellurideschool.org as we try to accommodate work schedules.

State Testing/ AP testing

Our community health is more valuable than a series of tests. The state, later today will be updating their position on this issue and we will do our best to meet that guidance once it is defined.

How will this effect the rest of the spring?

I believe if we maintain the right focus we can hit all the key benchmarks, particularly for our seniors, who many saw their spring activities canceled in a flash by CHSAA yesterday. I visited a few classrooms to answer questions and there is genuine concern among our students. Young students are scared with all the news and PSAs and our older students fear for their families and the real effects this could have on parents and grandparents. I shared I will do everything in my power to make sure such events like graduation and other landmark events happen in some way, shape or form for them. I hope we return to traditional delivery of school as soon as possible.

What should families plan for?

Daycare coverage will be the biggest challenge. I encourage families to communicate and share coverage with each other and employers to be flexible with work environments to accommodate families.

We are also working with our kitchen to see what meals we can provide for our students who rely on our lunch system as a key part of their existence and we will communicate those plans as they evolve.

I would also ask families to do your best in helping us provide for your learner. While it seems most of the state and surrounding states are heading for closure if not already closed, the pragmatic side of me knows there will be state accountability and documentation we will need to provide if we want “credit” for this time online. Please help us with student work completion. Today marks the end of the third quarter which is significant. We just need to complete the last 40- 45 days to wrap up this school year.

We will do our best to update our school community as we see changes. School offices will remain open and we have work to do for all our employees. Some of our students with disabilities or special services may be receiving home visits or invited in for a session to continue their services. How this can happen will be evolving over the next week.

Please continue to look for school communication through our School Messenger System. Parents have been great about sharing information and connecting us with people who were not updated in the system. This system pulls contacts off of PowerSchool. If you need assistance updating information please contact your front desk person.

I believe situations like this are a defining moment for a community. How we deal with and embrace this challenge will show how amazing we are as a community and the pride we have in educating our children. I believe we are tight as a community, tough enough to endure, and have the resilience to find the light to guide us through this historic event. I continue to be proud and work everyday with the safety and passion for your student(s).

Shine on in this time of uncertainty for kids,



Mike Gass, Superintendent

For most up to date information in San Miguel County please visit:

<https://www.sanmiguelcountyco.gov/590/Coronavirus>