



## **The School District of Osceola County, FL**

Dr. Debra Pace, Superintendent

### **Press Release**

March 17, 2020 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (English and Spanish)

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### **Extended School Closures For COVID-19 Pandemic**

#### ***A Message From Osceola School District Superintendent Dr. Debra Pace***

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to develop and spread throughout the country, your Osceola County School Board members and I understand that you have questions, concerns, and fears about the impact on our school district and you as critical stakeholders in our system. Please rest assured that the School Board and I continue to monitor the situation carefully, and we are working collaboratively with local government officials and local school districts, and most importantly, we are committed to doing everything in our power to mitigate the impact on the families we serve and the dedicated employees who work diligently to meet the needs of our students every chance, every child, every day.

As of this evening, the Florida Department of Education has said the earliest K-12 students will return back to school would be April 15, 2020. School closures are now in effect for all K-12 schools, the district's VPK and Extended Learning Programs, Osceola Technical College, and the Adult Learning Center Osceola. That date will be reevaluated every two weeks to determine its feasibility as the pandemic progresses. At this point, we await clarification from the state regarding student make-up day requirements, any waived days from our regular calendars, and any employee-related decisions required pursuant to this direction. All statewide assessments have been cancelled this school year. Information regarding graduation requirements, graduation ceremonies, and other end-of-year activities will be forthcoming as the situation progresses. For now, all mass gatherings of 10 or more individuals are canceled on our campuses until April 15, 2020.

To ensure our children will not go hungry while school is not in session, our School Nutrition Services Department will provide pack-and-go free meals for students at 12 designated sites, which can be found on the school district's website, from March 23 - April 15, between the hours of 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. Students will need to be with their parents or guardians who come to pick up the meal items, and we will utilize a drive-in procedure through our bus loops to minimize person-to-person contact.

As originally scheduled, our district offices will reopen tomorrow, March 18, for business; however, we ask you to utilize phone or electronic communication when possible to ask questions or address concerns. If it becomes necessary, we may restrict access to the buildings in order to keep groups of more than 10 from accumulating in our customer service areas. District staff members will be working throughout the rest of the week to finalize an instructional continuity plan so learning can continue now that school closures have been extended. The district's continuity instruction plan will be shared with students and parents next week and

fully implemented 3/30 - 4/15. Parents are asked to look for a brief survey via Remind tomorrow regarding student access to technology.

To our employees, please know that we will get through this together. Our Osceola County School Board Members and I are committed to the fact that regular employee compensation will be paid through this extended closure period.

**For the remainder of this week (Spring Break)**: Employees regularly scheduled to return to work tomorrow and who choose to not use their leave time and to work tomorrow, Thursday, and/or Friday should report to work. The exception is no one comes to work if they are exhibiting symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, including fever and/or dry cough; those individuals must contact their supervisor to request sick leave and contact their medical provider. All individuals who are returning from a cruise or travel out of the country must quarantine themselves for 14 days. Again, please contact your supervisor, request sick leave, and contact your medical provider. If you are reporting to work this week, please practice social distancing and healthy habits.

**Next week**: All district and school administrators should report to their normal work location/school on Monday, March 23, 2020, to begin preparing for their students' instructional continuity plans, unless they are exhibiting symptoms, are quarantined, or have been exposed to someone with the COVID-19 virus. All employees are asked to practice social distancing and healthy habits.

Directions for when and where all other employees (instructional staff, bus drivers, clerical staff, paraprofessionals, and other non-administrative personnel) should report on March 23 will be provided via email and call-out message no later than on Friday, March 20.

Thank you for your patience during this challenging time. I realize that the situation is changing hour by hour and day to day. At this point in time, there seems to be more questions than answers. We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and make decisions in the best interest of our students and staff. Be safe and be well.

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