

## **Alert Now call to Cross County March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

Good afternoon Cross County. I wish I was calling to decide whether we were having school tomorrow or not because of a snow storm. Unfortunately, we have bigger issues now than a snow storm and I have some information to share with you. I will also apologize up front for the length of this message but again, lots of information to share.

I have had many people over the past few days reach out with kind words knowing what decisions have to be made over the next few days or weeks. I thank you for that. I also know that decisions will be made that not everyone will agree on. I get that and what I will say is.....as a parent, you have to do what is best for your children regardless of the decisions that are being made at the local, state or even national level. Also please understand that decisions that I will be making concerning the school, will be made in the best interest of the students and staff safety.

With that said, I want to share some direction we have received from Governor Ricketts on what will be the trigger that has the state of Nebraska closing Cross County Schools due to COVID-19. The overall philosophy of “why” schools will close along with many other events being canceled is to create social isolation in the attempt to slow down the spread of the virus. The #1 reason for that is so that we flatten the curve on the number of people who get coronavirus so that we are not overwhelming our health systems. Regardless of whether I agree or not that closing a school is the right thing to do for this situation, I do understand their reasoning behind it. They simply do not want to overwhelm our health care systems and by closing schools.....they are hoping that helps create more social isolation by eliminating larger groups of people together at one time.

The Governor has organized school closing by their ESU membership. We are a member of ESU 7 out of Columbus, Nebraska and there are 19 member schools. The Governor stated on Friday that if there is any community spread (which means they cannot trace how that person became infected with the Coronavirus) within the ESU 7 area that the State of Nebraska will close those schools for 6-8 weeks. As many of you probably saw today, Nebraska is experiencing our first community spread case in Douglas County in eastern Nebraska.

As of today, we have not been informed by the state or any health department of any community spread cases in the ESU 7 area or Polk County area. With the information we have received from the Health Department and the state, Cross County will be open tomorrow, March 16<sup>th</sup>.

I also realize we are wrapping up our spring break and like many Nebraskans, quite a few of you traveled out of state. I am encouraging any parents in this situation to please monitor your health and your children's health closely. If any of you show any signs of sickness, please stay home until you can confirm that you have not been exposed.

I have also been given a statement by the health department stating that if any of you traveled to Level 3 Countries which are Europe, China, South Korea and Japan....or you traveled to California, Washington or New York City....they are requiring you to self-quarantine for 14 days. This is a new protocol just being issued in Nebraska. If this pertains to you, please keep your children home and call the school on Monday.

With recommendations from the Four Corners Health Department, visitors entering Cross County facility will be asked 3 questions. (1) Do you have a fever and/or have any respiratory symptoms? (2) Have you had close contact with a person known to have COVID-19? And (3) Have you traveled outside the USA or visited Ca, WA or New York City in the past 14 days? If the person answers yes to any of these 3 questions, they will be asked to leave the school building. Otherwise, visitors at this time are still welcome.

If we are closed by the state of Nebraska for 6-8 weeks, no school activities will be able to happen. I have also been working closely with our school attorneys on what we can legally do to try and educate remotely if this occurs. To summarize, we do not have the capacity right now nor the legal ability to "educate" children remotely at this time. Now please note as fast as things are changing, this too could change. But as of Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> ....no approved plan is in place or developed at this time to allow us to teach via e' learning if we are closed for the remainder of the year. NDE could change that with specific guidance. More to come on this topic in the future if we are indeed closed.

I would strongly encourage all of you to follow either the school twitter account or my twitter account. I would also encourage you to check the school Facebook

and web page frequently. Obviously our main point of contact is through the Alert Now system. So many questions out there that do not have answers yet. Please be patient as we navigate through this. As we have all heard lately, uncharted waters that we are entering.

I have heard there are some schools in the surrounding area that are self-closing. My decision to stay open is based on the recommendation from Governor Ricketts and Education Commissioner Blomstedt. There are zero known cases of Coronavirus in Polk County as of this evening and it is my goal to get in as many normal days of school for our children as we can.

I will put this announcement on the school web page, Facebook and social media outlets.

Have a great evening.