



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

TONY THURMOND
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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March 5, 2020

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and Principals:

2019 Novel Coronavirus Guidance Update for Schools and School Districts

We understand that some Californians may be concerned about novel coronavirus (COVID-19), as it is a new virus and there are a lot of unknowns. The health risk to the general public in California remains low at this time, however, California state and local health officials are actively monitoring the situation and preparing should the risk of infection to the general public increase. The California Department of Education (CDE) is participating in daily calls with several state agencies, as we learn more about COVID-19, and how best to support our schools and families.

In light of the State of Emergency declared on March 4, 2020, by the Governor, we would like to remind school communities that this was preparation-based, not because an outbreak currently exists. An emergency proclamation is designed to help focus resources and get a government response moving more quickly. Emergency declarations have unfortunately happened a number of times in the past few years, especially during wildfire season, and pertain to only those directly involved with the emergency situation.

We have provided guidance to our schools and districts throughout the state to encourage them to identify plans and protocols in preparation for the possibility of school closures, and for communicating with families due to a public health concern.

Deciding to close a school is a local decision, and one that CDE would not provide the directive on, especially if it is a public health concern. In the case of COVID-19, the decision to close a school would either come from the school and/or district, or ideally from their local county public health officials. We ask that you trust your local district leadership, as well as public health officials, to handle the potential of these situations with professionalism and calmness, and as always, with the safety of students and staff as the utmost priority.

It is important to note that so much of protecting yourself and your family comes from common sense practices, such as washing your hands with soap and water, staying away from work or school if you become sick with typical COVID-19 symptoms, and of course, following guidance from public health officials. We will continue to stay in close contact with public health officials, monitoring the situation with the experts, and as applicable, supporting our schools and districts as needed.

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For more information, please visit the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) web page:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>.

Please see the attached document for information on COVID-19 to share with your K-12 schools, districts, and county offices of education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Thurmond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" being more prominent than the last name "Thurmond".

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

TT:kb

attachment