



St. Charles Public Schools

District Office
600 East 6th Street
St. Charles, MN 55972
(507) 932-4420

High School Building
600 East 6th Street
St. Charles, MN 55972
(507) 932-4420

Elementary Building
925 Church Avenue
St. Charles, MN 55972
(507) 932-4910

April 24, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We learned yesterday that we will be required to continue with Distance Learning through the end of this school year. It was difficult news, and while it became easy to speculate that the decision to close Minnesota schools for the duration of the school year was coming, our staff was still hopeful that we would be able to see our students in our buildings again, and that we'd be able to close out the school year with field trips, attending concerts, watching fine arts performances, spectating at athletic events, embracing the excitement of prom, and celebrating the Class of 2020 through a traditional graduation ceremony.

The end of the school year is an exciting time for many. As a parent myself of three children in St. Charles Schools (with my oldest being a member of the Class of 2020), please know the grief you and your children may be experiencing over the loss of the opportunity to celebrate the many milestones that come with the end of any school year as we have traditionally done so in the past is shared by all of us.

A common theme that has echoed as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the world is that, "We are all in this together!" While the end of the 2019-2020 school year will be different than what we are used to, as will the ways we end up celebrating our students' milestones, we will stay committed to sending our students off in a proper fashion, and will do it together.

Decisions will be made and communicated in the near future on how we will close out the school year. We have also fielded questions on summer programming (summer school and School Aged Child Care). We have asked for clarification and guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education on the level of youth summer enrichment programming we can provide as well as whether or not we will be permitted to expand the level of child care beyond the current emergency child care we are providing. As we receive clarification on what type of programming we will be able to offer throughout the summer, we will communicate with families as soon as we can.

I know I have said this before, but please know that you can count on our staff to put forth their best effort to continue to provide your children with the best possible education through this platform. Distance Learning is not a perfect platform, and for many it is not ideal. Regardless of the challenges we experience trying to reach our students through this platform, we are committed to giving them our best.

The next few pages of this letter include updates on Distance Learning, Student Supports for Distance Learning, our Free Meals Program (all waivers are approved and we can now provide meal delivery service to everyone who needs it), and our Emergency School Age Child Care program.

Thanks again for your patience, understanding, and continued support.

Sincerely,

Jeff Apse
Superintendent of Schools
japse@schs.k12.mn.us

Distance Learning Period Extended for Rest of School Year

Yesterday, Governor Walz issued an Executive Order effectively extending the Distance Learning Period through the end of the school year.

The previous Executive Order called for the Distance Learning Period to end on April 30th and for May 1st and May 4th to be used as planning days. Students were to be welcomed back on May 5th.

With the new Executive Order, school districts are required to use May 1st and May 4th as planning days, and will be non-instructional days for students. Our students and their parents can expect a break from Distance Learning on those days. Even though those days will now be non-instructional days, since they were previously scheduled as school days in our District's Academic Calendar we will provide both student meals and Emergency Child Care on those days.

While it is disappointing that we will not be able to welcome our students back into our buildings this school year, we remain committed to providing the best possible education and service to our students and their families. We have been navigating through this together for the past three weeks, and have greatly appreciated the feedback families have been providing. As we prepare for the final month of the school year, we encourage our students and their parents to continue to provide regular feedback.

Please take a moment to click [here](#) to share with us what you feel has been working well, what is not, and what you feel we could be doing better to meet the needs of our students.

If you need a copy of our Distance Learning Plan, English and Spanish versions of our Distance Learning Plan are available on our Distance Learning Site at <https://www.scschools.net/page/6135>.

Student Supports for Distance Learning

Tech Support

Tech Support requests from students can be submitted at any time. Requests will be monitored regularly Monday-Friday on days school is scheduled to be in session from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. Tech requests will be responded to within 24 hours.

Requests can be made by calling 507-932-4420 or 507-932-4910 and selecting "0" when prompted for options. Requests may also be made by sending an email to studentsupport@schs.k12.mn.us.

Support for our Spanish Speaking Families

A support team has been established to assist our Spanish speaking families who are seeking assistance with Distance Learning. Families needing assistance are encouraged to call the schools at 507-932-4420 or 507-932-4910 and to dial "9" to leave a message for our support line. A member of our support team will be in contact with you within 24 hours.

Contacting the Schools for Assistance

Just a reminder, we are here to support you! If you need assistance navigating through Distance Learning, you can call the schools at any time. Staff are available to take calls during regular operating hours from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on days that school is scheduled to be in session.

If you are not able to connect with a staff member, please leave a voice mail. Voice mails will be monitored throughout the day and distributed to the appropriate people. Our staff will work to respond to your questions within 24-48 hours. Click [here](#) to view our full staff directory with phone extensions and email addresses.

All Waivers Approved! Free Meals Available via Pickup or Delivery for All Regardless of Free and Reduced Price Lunch Status

We recently received notification that the Federal waiver the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) applied for allowing school districts like ours to continue to provide free delivered meals to all students regardless of their Free and Reduced Price Lunch status was approved for the duration of the Distance Learning Period. We also learned earlier this week that the applications we had submitted to the State for our district were also approved.

This is good news as it allows us to expand how we can serve our families, and it means we can go back to doing what we were doing prior to April 1st by offering meal delivery service to families that need the service regardless of their Free and Reduced Lunch status.

Free meals are available for all children in our District ages 18 and under on days that school was scheduled to be in session.

If you have not signed up for the meal program yet, we encourage you to sign up so that your children can take advantage of this opportunity. Signing up will result in the following:

- 2 FREE healthy cold meals per day (breakfast and lunch) will be provided for your children during the shutdown period; and
- The meals will be provided on days that school was originally scheduled to be in session.

Meals can be picked up on days that school was scheduled to be in session at the Elementary School, 925 Church Avenue, St. Charles, MN 55972, from 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Click [here](#) to sign up for the meal plan. If you are interested in the meal delivery service, please contact Kay Muschler at kmuschler@schs.k12.mn.us or by calling the Elementary School at 507-932-4910.

Free Emergency School Age Child Care

For the duration of the Distance Learning Period, St. Charles Public Schools will continue providing child care for children in grades Preschool through 6th Grade whose parents are Tier 1 and Tier 2 emergency workers critical to the State's response to COVID-19 who do NOT have alternative care previously arranged or cannot keep their child home with them. Care is available from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on regularly scheduled school days per the [District's 2019-2020 Calendar](#).

Child Care provided outside of the regular school day hours of 8:15 a.m. until 2:45 p.m. is considered Extended Care. There is a charge of \$4.00 per hour for Extended Care hours.

Our program is staffed by our Elementary school paraprofessionals with administrative support from Elementary Principal, Ryan Ihrke and Community Education Director, Julie Siebenaler.

If you are in need of Emergency Care for the period of May 4-May 29, you can click [here](#) to sign up.

Questions about the program should be directed to Julie Siebenaler at communityed@schs.k12.mn.us.