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Interim Commissioner Kevin C. Brown's March 13 letter to families

By **Kevin C. Brown** - March 13, 2020

Dear Kentucky Public School Families:

I am sending you this letter – in conjunction with the Kentucky Department for Public Health – to let you know some important information during the time your children will not be attending in-person classes over the course of the next several weeks.

Interim Commissioner Kevin C. Brown

On March 12, Gov. Andy Beshear recommended all public and private schools close for at least the next two weeks to help control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) across Kentucky. The governor said while children seem to be relatively safe from the virus, they are able to spread it and we are taking the steps necessary to protect all Kentuckians.

Today, we were able to confirm with the superintendents at all of Kentucky's 172 public school districts – in addition to the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the state's 53 Area Technology Centers – that they had made the decision close for at least two weeks starting March 16 or 17.

I want you to know that this recommendation to close Kentucky's public schools was not taken lightly. It was made upon the advice of our state Public Health Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack and many other trusted medical professionals who have been working tirelessly over the past few days to ensure that we take a proactive approach to this issue based on science and research.

While school is out during this unprecedented time, the Kentucky Department for Public Health is asking all Kentuckians to stay away from large crowds, something known as social distancing.

We ask that you keep children from gathering with their friends at public places, such as the mall or the movies. This is most important for children with chronic diseases, such as asthma or diabetes, who are the

most at-risk of catching COVID-19.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to it in the first place. Remember these tips from the Department for Public Health:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick (fever, cough, sneeze, and difficulty breathing). To avoid close contact, stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. To avoid coughing into your hands, you can cough into your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that wearing a facemask will not protect the public from COVID-19.

Here are some sources for more information that may be helpful to you and your family:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage, which includes guidance on the virus and resources for K-12 schools.
- The Cabinet for Health and Family Services' COVID-19 webpage, which includes information from the CDC and will be updated as information becomes available.
- A KDE webpage on COVID-19 that includes information on the virus and links to the sample flu plan and talking points for school nurses from the National Association of School Nurses.
- The COVID-19 state hotline: (800) 722-5725.

We will all need to exercise calmness and flexibility over the next month. Additionally, I know that our students face disappointment over the cancellation of school-related activities and events. However, these sacrifices are necessary for the health and safety of our communities. I know that you have a lot of questions and we are working to find answers for you (See: COVID-19: Answers to FAQs for Kentucky's Public School Families). Despite these challenges, our public schools will continue to find ways to support students and families during this time.

Sincerely,

Kevin C. Brown

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