

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information (3-3-20)

- **DESE Response to School Closure/AMI Questions:** The public attention surrounding COVID-19 has led to several questions about what will happen if a school must close for an extended period of time. While COVID-19 is the current focus, it is important to remember that this is not the first time that illness, natural disaster or other events have affected school operations. DESE has historically worked with districts when exceptional circumstances cause school closures. As with any situation where a possible closure can be anticipated, districts are encouraged to consider what alternative plans can be developed and implemented to support student learning in the absence of standard instructional practices. While the Alternative Methods of Instruction (AMI) statute does not take effect until the 2020-21 school year, the [guidance DESE issued](#) with the AMI application can assist schools in planning for both general and special education.
- **CDC Issues Updated COVID-19 Guidance for Schools:** Health officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the United States. Schools can play an important role in this effort. Through collaboration and coordination with local health departments, schools can take steps to disseminate information about the disease and its potential transmission within their school community. Information provided in the guidance at the link below should help schools understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within their school communities and facilities. The guidance also aims to help schools react quickly should a case be identified. The guidance includes considerations to help administrators plan for the continuity of teaching and learning if there is community spread of COVID-19. [Read the CDC guidance information here.](#)
- **Communicating with Stakeholders:** Our Missouri School Public Relations Association (MOSPRA) has compiled helpful resources [here](#) for communicating about COVID-19 with the stakeholders in your community. The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) has put together similar resources [here](#). Our colleagues at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services also gave DESE the following two examples of informational letters disseminated in Maricopa County, AZ. [This sample letter was sent home to students' families.](#) [This sample letter was sent to schools from their local health department officials.](#) Please note that each individual communications example listed here has not yet been vetted by DESE officials.
- **CDC Handwashing Guidance:** With concerns in the media and among our citizens gaining more attention, it is very important to stress that the most effective method for preventing the spread of virus is simply using good hygiene, especially effective, thorough handwashing. Please take two minutes to watch [this CDC video](#) which answers important questions about handwashing and hand sanitizer.