



School Closure Update
Tuesday, April 28, 2020

Dear Parents, Families and Colleagues,

This afternoon, our Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to keep our school buildings and facilities closed for the remainder of this 2019/2020 school year. This was an exceptionally difficult decision but one that was made in an effort to prioritize the safety of our students, employees and families. While school buildings will not physically reopen, teaching and learning will continue through remote learning through the scheduled end of our 2019/2020 school year.

Across the last week, we have worked to proceed through a process that will be a foundation for all of our future decisions. This process involved gathering, researching and considering all applicable guidance pertaining to schools. We crafted a plan for reopening that forced us to assess our readiness against this guidance. As we did that across these last few days, it became apparent that our schools are not ready to physically reopen as there are a number of outstanding areas that would have exposed our students, employees and families to significant, known risks.

As was noted last week, our pathway to open called for our plans, actions, and resources to transcend the known risks of virus transmission. While this is possible in some areas, we are unprepared and inadequately resourced in others. These inadequacies place our students, colleagues and loved ones at risk and to knowingly doing so is unacceptable. Furthermore, continued closure of school buildings is aligned with guidance from Lewis & Clark Public Health as well as many other health care professionals.

Please look for future updates as there are many decisions that must now be made including fourth quarter grading criteria, year-end processes and other important matters. In the interim, please continue to watch for updates from your child's teacher/teachers and principal.

Thank you again for your time, your understanding and your continued support. Many of you have shared your thoughts with either myself and/or our Board of Trustees across the last week and I want you to know that your feedback has been valued and appreciated. This decision to keep our school facilities physically closed has been difficult to consider, as there were benefits and consequences for either option. In the end, we believe the decision that we have made is consistent with our priority to keep our students, employees and their families safe, as we are currently unable to quickly prepare our schools accordingly in relation to the provided guidance.

Please take care, stay safe and stay connected.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Ream".

Tyler Ream
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools