



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Minnesota South District

... cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God

March 16, 2020

**Dear Elementary, Middle School, and High School Administrators,**

Saturday evening, I went to church and heard a wonderful sermon on the Christian's response to Coronavirus. Pastor Klaus took Martin Luther's letter on a pastor's response to the Black Death (Plague) and put it into the context of our modern world. Essentially our response is threefold:

1. **We should pray.** Pray for the sick, for our healthcare workers, for those working on cures, for ourselves. (**Psalm 145:18, Hebrews 4:16**)
2. **We should prevent and protect.** Do the things that will keep us healthy and able to do the Lord's work. Observe quarantines and the orders of those in authority. Wash hands / use sanitizer. If sick, stay away from others and take medicines to get better.
  - **Romans 8:21-39** Nothing will be able to separate us from Christ's love
  - **Romans 14:8** Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord

We need not fear because God needs us, one way or another . . .

3. **We need to help.** There are those who will need us in our community. We are called to do acts of mercy and kindness and to share Jesus' love in the madness of a world where people are frightened. (**John 13:34**)

May these three principles guide you as you move forward in leading your school through the next weeks and months.

## The Governor has closed school-based learning, now what?

I have put together numerous resources and thoughts for you as you navigate these uncharted waters. While school-based learning is called off for two weeks, judging by other states and the experiences in China, South Korea, and Europe, it is very likely that it will be much longer than two weeks. Plan as if school-based learning will go on indefinitely.

## Do we have to follow the Governor?

Technically, the order is for public schools only. Non-publics are strongly encouraged to follow. However, consider the following:

- What public school services will you lose if you stay open (busing, special education, nursing)?
- How will you serve families that choose to pull out their students? If students are sick, they are not to be in school. What kind of burden are you putting on your staff if they have to deliver education two ways—to those at school and to those at home? What if staff are sick?
- What if you do have a case of COVID-19 transmitted at your school? What is your liability when the Governor declared an emergency and closed schools?

What resonated with me is the superintendent's statement, "In the end, it will be impossible to know if we overreacted or did too much, but it will be quite apparent if we under reacted or did too little." **Hear those words.**

## Should we provide care for children of healthcare workers and first responders (as public schools are doing)?

Childcare has now been identified as an essential service and is generally considered to be exempt from closing. If you have families at your school that are first responders or healthcare workers and need childcare, and perhaps others that need childcare, consider if this is something your school could do to provide help for your families. This is a difficult time—perhaps you can be the place where they have some stability. If you do this, you will also need to consider how you will handle children and staff that are sick (get expert advice).

Some thoughts about childcare:

- Consider posting a person at the entrance to measure temperatures of every staff member and child entering the building. If they have a temperature of 100.4°F or above, they may either not enter until they have a doctor's note, or enter into your "sick area" procedures.
- Rotate your staff so they each have a turn being in charge and share in the duty.
- Make sure your care includes the reason we are different than what is going on in a public school—our faith, prayer, devotion, Bible, and a law-Gospel approach.

## Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!!!!

- There are people who are frightened out there, including among your staff, students, and their families. People in fear need the Gospel more than ever.
- See Kim Marxhausen's blog post on [how to help parents with young children explain COVID-19 to their children](#).
- A good resource to keep principals connected to parents and students is [BombBomb video email](#). BombBomb is providing video email services free of charge to all schools (teachers, administrators, superintendents, etc.). A nice component of BombBomb video email is that it tracks who actually opens your email—you know if they are receiving or ignoring.
- Provide tips for parents on how to educate their children at home.
- As time goes on, develop a system to intentionally check in on your families. Are they well? Do they need anything? How can we help? How can we be praying for you?

## This is all new—don't try too much!

- Give yourself time—allow for staff to get together at school and learn from one another on how virtual learning is going and works before you start.
- Even after you get going, give your staff time to adjust and to receive support. Consider a four-day week virtual school schedule. Use the fifth day for your teachers to plan and prepare their lessons for the next week. This will be very different for them, and they will need more planning time.

## Guiding principles for teachers

- Prioritize what's really important . . . For me, it would be: faith (pray), safety (prevent and protect), mercy ministry (help), academics.
- Simplify things where you can.
- Be flexible.
- Share the load with your colleagues.
- Attempt to hold students harmless for difficult decisions we make.

## Lutheran resources

- Be sure to check out the [Synod's school resources site](#).
- Get your staff on the **#luthed.org Facebook group**. Lots of good discussion and suggestions.
- **Genesis Virtual Academy** is eager to help with E-Learning that may be necessary among our schools as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. They are able to provide training for your classroom teachers to implement short-term GVA courses as you seek a solution to effectively serve your students in all grades. Even if you do not choose to use Genesis Virtual Academy courses, Kim Ross, the school's director, can assist you to better serve your students. Please contact Kim Ross at [kross@genesisva.org](mailto:kross@genesisva.org) or at (612) 567-6482 for more information.
- **Wittenberg Academy's** head teacher, Jocelyn Benson, has let us know that they have the infrastructure in place if any of our Lutheran schools need to go offline to conduct classes. She can set up virtual (asynchronous) classrooms for teachers to house lectures, activities, quizzes, discussions, etc. They can give teachers and students secure usernames and passwords for access to the classrooms and can have those set up in short amount of time if provided with first/middle/last names and email addresses for students and teachers. Contact Jocelyn at [mrsbenson@wittenbergacademy.org](mailto:mrsbenson@wittenbergacademy.org).

## Virtual learning tools

- Here is an [article on Forbes](#) that describes how you can get free Zoom videoconferencing with unlimited meeting minutes. Zoom is a great videoconferencing tool to use, but usually their free basic account limits you to 40 minutes. If you click on [this link](#), you can register for unlimited minutes for your schools, as long as you have a school email address associated with your school's website domain. This could be something your teachers could use for classroom or student meetings, or something that you could use for staff meetings while our schools are closed.
- [Online Teaching Resources - Lucy Gray - Public](#) (This is a VERY comprehensive document.)
- [Education Companies Offering Free Subscriptions due to School Closings](#)
- [Remote Learning Resources](#)
- [Checklist for Administrators and Educators Facing a School Closure](#)
- [Resources for Teaching Online Due to School Closures](#)
- [School Closure Resources](#)
- [Remote Learning Resources, Subscriptions, and Platforms](#)
- [Closed for COVID19?!](#)
- [Remote teaching and learning resources from Microsoft Education](#)
- [Coronavirus Resources for Schools](#)
- [Free webinar: Online Learning Tips for School Closures](#)
- [Coronavirus Closures? Online Learning Tips for Teachers and Schools \[interview with an American teacher in China\]](#)
- [Distance Learning with Google Slides](#)
- [Teaching Online](#)
- [7 Best Free Digital Classroom Management and Collaboration Software](#)
- [Many wonderful links and ideas](#)
- [Mario Framework Learning Support Community](#)

- [Exploring by the Seat of Your Pants](#)
- [Pearltrees: Tools for Specific Subjects](#)
- [Minecraft: Education Edition](#)
- [Copy of Collaborative List of FREE Information Literacy / Technology Integration Lessons](#)
- [School Closure Planning Document](#)
- [Expectations for Successful Online Meetings & Chats](#)
- [200 Free Kids Educational Resources: Video Lessons, Apps, Books, Websites, & More](#)

## Virtual curricular tools:

- Utilize the [BibleProject](#) to insert religion curriculum in this learning plan
- [Storyline Online](#) features picture books creatively read aloud by celebrated actors. Includes lesson plans for teachers and a connection resource for parents.
- [Freckle: Reading Across the Curriculum](#) to meet the reading level of students
- [Lots of Free Resources for Remote Learning](#)
- [Zoom is now free for schools closed due to COVID-19](#)
- [PBS - free resources for science documentaries](#) airing leading up to Earth Day, April 22nd. Families could watch these together! Airs March 14th, 21st, and 31st.
- [Common Sense Media](#) has great educational resources for kids, educators, and a PARENT section
- [NewsELA](#) is now offering free upgraded resources to guide admin, teachers, and students through the COVID-19 remote learning
- [Daily free learning workbooks for teachers to share with parents](#)
- [Middle School - good for vocabulary and reading across the curriculum](#)

As always, we are here to support you. You are in our prayers as you move forward into these uncharted waters. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if we can help in any way.

Peace in Jesus,



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