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# Shepherd School District #37

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October 19, 2020

Welcome Winter! Record first snowfall since 1949 and its only October. We tried our first late start today rather than calling an entire snow day. Roads were very slick and icy first thing. The traffic was much less later in the morning and things had improved so it was a success. In the future, if we need to call a snow day, we may just convert to an online learning day. Teachers will be asked to be prepared for either a late start or an online learning day. I know having to cover having your kids at home rather than in school can be tough but we will keep safety a top priority.

Back in July, we decided to open with a full 5 days a week schedule for all students K-12. Other schools around us are open 1-2 days a week or have no school for students on Fridays. We wanted to do what would be best for our students as well as our families and keep kids in school for the most amount of time possible. When we chose to open school full time with all of our students for 5 days a week, we did not understand the impact it would have on our teachers. When a student is showing symptoms of COVID, they are sent home or parents have been keeping them home and most are then getting tested. This is a recommendation of us from Riverstone Health. When they are awaiting test results, students are placed on a short-term remote learning list. This list varies at each grade level but is from 2-10+ students and is changing daily. This helps them not lose 2-5 days of instruction while waiting for results. While our teachers are doing an exceptional job of making this happen so there is very little disruption in learning for the students, they are overwhelmed with converting their curriculum to online each day to accommodate all of our students learning onsite and remote. We will be changing two (2) of our instruction days to teacher work days on Monday, October 26th and Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup> for teachers to have some extra time for other items such as unit planning, getting report cards ready and creating online learning platforms. Teachers will be required to be on campus those two days but there will be no school for students. These two days WILL NOT be online learning days so students will not be receiving instruction from teachers. Athletics will run as normal with practices. Please plan ahead for no school on those two Mondays in order for our staff to have planning time. We already have other breaks worked in for the winter/spring time. These two days will be the only ones we ask of you for additional days off. The only other school closure would be COVID related and we do not anticipate that in the near future and hopefully not at all.

To give you an update on where we are at with COVID and Shepherd Schools, things are going well. The numbers across the state and in Yellowstone County are going up, but for the most part it is going well at schools. County Health is not seeing an increase that is driven by schools. This is good news. School growth is far less than community growth for the time being. We have had 4 cases in our district since August 17<sup>th</sup>. We are not getting information from public health in a timely manner and are relying on



parents more to help us out. All contact tracing for people at school is being done here at school by us so it is faster than going through Riverstone Health. We have not had to contact trace that many students due to everyone following the guidelines we have in place. Hopefully this continues and we can proceed on as best and as close to normal as we can for the year.

Thank you as parents/guardians for helping us through this process. Thank you for being supportive in what we are doing. We are going to continue to keep sanitizing, social distancing and wearing masks in order to keep students in school.

**Upcoming Events:**

October 26 – NO SCHOOL (added teacher work day)  
November 25-27 – Thanksgiving Break  
November 30 – NO SCHOOL (added teacher work day)  
December 21 – January 1 – Christmas/Winter Break

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the building principals or myself. Please understand we still consider health and safety a priority, while we continue to educate. Continue to check our website and Facebook pages for the most up to date information for you as our families.

Sincerely,

Drea O'Donnell  
Superintendent

