



## Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions

March 17, 2020

The Sonoma County Office of Education, in partnership with the Sonoma County Department of Health Services and other state and regional agencies, continues to closely monitor and prepare for Coronavirus, officially known as COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date information from health officials, please visit [socoemergency.org](https://socoemergency.org).

### **Q: Why are in-person classes being suspended in Sonoma County?**

A: As part of ongoing efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within the community, and based on recommendations released by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services and Sonoma County Office of Education, all school districts have announced they will suspend in-person classes. Following the March 17 Shelter in Place order, school districts will be working with the county's public health officer to determine an appropriate reopening date. We will share updates as they are known. Thank you for your patience during this rapidly changing situation.

Following the declaration of a state of emergency in California, this decision allows our community to "flatten the curve" and help mitigate the spread of community transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

This decision was not made lightly. We know that canceling classes has a significant impact on students, their parents, and the community. We have been focused around the clock on how to, under rapidly changing circumstances, keep our students, staff, and school communities protected and healthy.

### **Q: Why were classes canceled when children have been shown not to be at high risk for Coronavirus?**

A: While children are not as susceptible to this illness as older individuals, they can spread the illness to older family members. Closing school is seen as an important part of the effort to slow the "community spread" of the illness. If the spread of Coronavirus is slowed, then health service providers have a better chance of serving those who are ill.

### **Q: What will happen while classes are suspended?**



A: School districts will spend the week of spring break working hard to put in place plans to provide continued meal service and distance learning options. Each school district will be communicating with their families regarding what they can expect in the week following spring break.

**Q: Will students still receive instruction while classes are suspended?**

A: In many cases, yes, though this will vary school district by school district. The intent is that students will remain home while staff may report to their school sites or departments and exercise social distancing as they continue to prepare remote learning opportunities and other support services for our students.

**Q: Who makes the decision to close school due to Coronavirus?**

A: The county public health officer decides when schools should close or suspend in-person classes, in collaboration with the affected school district. SCOE acts as a liaison between school districts and the public health officer. For this reason, SCOE is in close, regular communication with county health officials in order to provide up-to-date guidance to school districts.

**Q: Who determines when classes will resume?**

A: Each district will need to set its own calendar and address distance learning activities for students. The decision to resume in-person classes will be made in collaboration with the public health officer, based on the latest information about the spread of Coronavirus in Sonoma County.

**Q: What "distance learning" or Independent Study protocols are being considered?**

A: SCOE is working closely with school districts to support them in having remote learning options in place when spring break ends. What this looks like will vary district-by-district, depending on a range of factors. Some districts that have gone "1:1" with a laptop for every student may be able to provide virtual instruction. Other districts may need to provide paper packets for families. SCOE will continue working to support districts to strengthen their remote learning programs.

**Q: While in-person classes are suspended, will meals be provided to students who receive free and reduced lunch?**

A: Yes, many school districts already have plans in place to provide meals to families that qualify for free and reduced lunch. Check with your local school district to learn more. SCOE is working closely with districts to support them in setting up these programs. In the case where a district



cannot provide this service, we are working to see if nonprofit agencies can work with the school district to offer meal service to students.

**Q: Do schools have an emergency response plan for Coronavirus?**

A: Yes, SCOE has created an infectious disease control plan that has been approved by the public health department. [It is available here.](#)

**Q: Once classes resume, will field trips and large events like sports and prom be canceled?**

A: This is a rapidly changing situation. Schools are considering field trips and events on a case-by-case basis. There will likely be a need to cancel, postpone, or modify many field trips and large events.

**Q: Are additional sanitation procedures taking place in classrooms and offices?**

A: Districts are being encouraged to use flu-season cleaning protocols, which include frequent wipe-downs of commonly touched surfaces. SCOE has created a school site cleaning protocol that districts may use to guide their cleaning efforts. At SCOE's main offices, custodial staff are cleaning conference room surfaces between each event.