March 26, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As announced by Governor Northam, Smyth County Schools, along with all Virginia Schools, will remain closed for the remainder of this school year. As stated by our Governor, this decision was made in the best interest of safety and health for all Virginians. A school closing of this length is unprecedented and, while we do not know what the next few months will look like for our students, families and communities, please know the SCS team is committed to do our best in the continuity of learning for all of our students.

As you can imagine, the continuity of learning will not resemble anything we have experienced before. Communication between home and school is extremely important. We will need to support each other as we navigate throughout the remainder of the academic year. SCS is committed to ensuring our school families are informed about the division’s response to the school closure. Flexibility will be key in moving forward with instruction for our students. As always, your patience and understanding is always appreciated! We will work to provide new information as it becomes available. Below you will find specific areas regarding our plan as we move forward.

Food Service
Teachers and staff from SCS continue to offer meals daily throughout our division. We are also continuing our service of meal deliveries to those who do not have the ability to pick up the meals at school. We are very appreciative of our Child Nutrition staff for their countless hours of service and dedication to the students we serve. We are also thankful for those instructional staff members and bus drivers for helping with pick-up and delivery of food.

Instructional Activities
Teachers and staff from SCS have worked diligently to provide packets of instruction for students in PK-5 and Google Classroom activities for students in grades 6-12 for the initial 2 week closure. When Governor Northam closed school for the remainder of the year, our instructional structure was already established. We will continue to provide educational opportunities for our students in grades Pk-5 through instructional packets that may be picked up or will be delivered for those
families that do not have the ability to pick up the materials. Students in grades 6-12 will continue
to have information shared with them through Google Classroom. Both packet information for
our Pk-5 students and Google Classroom activities for our 6-12 students will be updated every 2
weeks. Our hopes are that our next series of instructional materials will be ready on Friday, April
3. Our teachers and/or instructional support staff will be available for remote support daily during
the hours of 9 am -12 pm and 1 pm - 3 pm. Additionally, our instructional staff and/or
instructional support staff will be reaching out to our students and families to check on student
progress during the duration of the academic year.

Makeup Days
School divisions were informed that students will not be required to make up the days we are
closed under the Governor’s mandate. However, we are required to offer continued learning
opportunities. The SCS response is outlined above in the section entitled “Instructional Activities.”

SOL Testing
The United States Department of Education has given flexibility to Virginia, through the
application of a waiver, in regards to the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. The Virginia Board of
Education will take action to submit the waiver at their next meeting. In addition, the General
Assembly will need to approve flexibility in the administration of SOL tests for those tests we
administer above and beyond what is required by the United States Department of Education. We
do fully expect for the SOL testing requirement to be waived for this academic year.

Prom and Graduation
SCS has not made a decision regarding prom and graduation ceremonies for the 2019-2020 school
year. Governor Northam issued a statewide order to protect the safety of Virginians and reduce
the spread of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. The Executive Order bans all gatherings of
more than 10 people and will be enforced through April 24, 2020. We understand that two of our
proms fall within this 30 day time frame and therefore cannot be held as scheduled. While we are
hopeful of continuation, the cancellation of the prom and a change to graduation is possible. A
determination will not be made until the completion of the Executive Order and additional
guidance from Governor Northam and/or the Virginia Department of Education.

Free Wifi Access
SCS is offering public Wifi access for students and families during the school closure. The access
points are located at each school and designed so students and families will have connectivity from
the parking lot. The name of the free Wifi network is SCPS_Guest. It does not require a password
to join the network. Note: This Wifi network goes through the school system’s filtering software,
as required by law. Devices that connect to it are assigned our standard high school student
filtering profile.

Athletics
The VHSL held a conference call March 24, 2020 with its VHSL Crisis Management team to
discuss all options relating to spring sports and academic activities after the current academic year
ends and into the summer. The VHSL Crisis Management team unanimously recommended to
delay any final action until May.
“While we recognize the importance sports has on our students and communities, the COVID-19 threat is real and people need to follow all the regulations and recommendations from the CDC, Virginia Department of Health, and the Governor. We must make that our number one priority,” said VHSL Executive Director Dr. John W. “Billy” Haun. “The Crisis Management team overwhelmingly felt a decision on an extension to the spring sports season should be put on hold until May. Any options for the spring sports season will require that COVID-19 is no longer a threat and poses no health risks to our student-athletes or the public.”

Final Thoughts

While we will continue to provide information as additional decisions are made, please do not hesitate to contact your child’s school to ask specific questions. Please continue to take care of yourself and your family. If your situation has changed and you now need support of lunch and breakfast for your child, please contact your child’s school and we will arrange a pick-up or drop off.

Sincerely,

Dennis Carter
Superintendent

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