# **Update of School Services during School Closure**

By [admin](https://www.haywood.k12.nc.us/blog/author/admin/) / March 16, 2020

Today is the first day of a state ordered school closure for all public schools in North Carolina. Schools will be closed for at least two weeks. We are experiencing something unique for Haywood County Schools and much of the world. Hopefully, this will be a once in a lifetime experience for all of us. Public educators have a responsibility to: avoid emotional reactions, base our actions on the facts as we know them, and lead in the implementation of state and federal directives related to COVID-19.

I want to assure everyone, we have great people and we will get through this better than other communities. Many of us worked preemptively on practical, and some unique, responses to the imposed school closure. Work was done last week on educational support and food distribution plans for students. Several of us met in a nearly three-hour work session with district-level staff members. Two School Board members attended the meeting. Earlier today, principals met with school staff about educational support for students. Those meetings were followed by a meeting of all principals. This meeting with principals included updates on the following matters.

Food distribution will begin on Tuesday, March 17th. This will occur from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the following locations. Parents, guardians, and caregivers may pick up meals for any child ages one (1) to eighteen (18). This is possible under special provisions related to school closures during a declared state of emergency. A marked designated area for drive-through pickup will be established at the following schools. For additional information, please contact one of these schools. The food distribution locations are as follows:

* Bethel Elementary
* Clyde Elementary
* Hazelwood Elementary
* Jonathan Valley Elementary
* Junaluska Elementary
* Meadowbrook Elementary
* North Canton Elementary
* Waynesville Middle School

We are preparing plans for food distribution using school buses. We will provide additional information about this forthcoming food distribution later this week.

Individual schools will begin promptly notifying our families regarding educational support activities while schools are closed. Schools have been directed to provide a variety of digital and paper opportunities. We understand some families will not have digital access and others will not have the ability to pick up materials at school. Hopefully, a multifaceted approach will allow reasonable educational support to students. We understand educational support will not match the quality of direct instruction by a highly qualified teacher. This is especially true for younger students. On the other hand, many high school students already participate in digital learning for high school and college credit.

We have received legal and public health guidance regarding employees who have chronic health conditions. Employees with concerns in this area should speak with their principal or Support Services Department Director. The principal will follow up with our Human Resources Department for guidance. Individual situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate action will be taken based upon the chronic health condition, public health directives, and physician documentation. Again, employees with chronic health concerns should begin by speaking with their principal or director.

There is a Special Called Board Work Session on Tuesday, March 17, at 6:00 p.m. We will discuss the items described above with the Board and seek Board member input on future matters. This is an evolving situation and we will have to rely on state and federal guidance regarding some future decisions.

We encourage school staff and members of the community to take the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously. We are under a declared national emergency, state emergency, and Governor’s order to close all schools in North Carolina for at least two weeks. Just because we do not have confirmed cases in Haywood County, that does not mean we should dismiss, ignore, or in any way usurp state and federal directives designed to limit the impact of COVID-19. We need to take reasonable precautions to prevent unnecessary illness and the potential death of our fellow citizens.

We will continue to provide updates as we receive additional guidance and as the situation in Haywood County evolves. In the meantime, take precautions to avoid crowds and remember to use universal precautions:

* Frequently wash your hands
* Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth
* Cover your cough or sneeze
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with an appropriate disinfectant
* If you become ill, stay home and seek medical care

This link (<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>) provides state updates on COVID-19. It contains a wealth of information for people interested in COVID-19. You can also call 866-462-3821 for additional information.

Contact: Dr. Bill Nolte, Superintendent