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**SHANNON KING, SUPERINTENDENT**

March 13, 2020

Dear Parents,

On Thursday, March 12, during an afternoon press conference, Governor Brian Kemp addressed the state's growing concerns by allowing school districts to close for up to 14 days. After careful thought and consideration, Echols County Schools has determined it to be in the best interest to close our school district effective Monday, March 16 through at least Friday, March 27. Our school district remains hyper-focused on your health and safety and will continue monitoring and sharing information about the developing situation with COVID-19. Should there be a need to extend the closure, we will communicate that message with our families.

Making the decision to close schools is never an easy one. However, given the uncertainty of the rapidly changing situation with COVID-19, we know this is the best plan of action for protecting our students, staff, and faculty members. The school closures include all school building activities, extracurricular activities, athletics, and trips. During this time, no staff or students should report to any office or school in the Echols County School System.

Many question why our district was open today, Friday, March 13. Mainly, we understand that our families will need time to plan for childcare before our schools close on Monday. Additionally, we wanted to have an opportunity to share expectations with our faculty and staff as it relates to student communication while our schools are closed.

We understand that many will have on-going concerns about how these closures will impact their families; please know that we will not have answers to all of them. Our plans will evolve daily as we begin to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. However, our districts will continue to answer as many as we can through our websites, social media sites, and local media outlets. Employees of the districts are encouraged to reach out to their supervisors for any questions or updates.

We appreciate everyone's patience and support as our communities work together to move past this pandemic health crisis. We are grateful for the constant guidance from Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and various other state agencies, departments and leaders.

We encourage all of our Wildcat families to continue following the recommended hygienic prevention methods. If you begin to feel sick or experience symptoms, contact your health care provider via phone immediately. All providers are asking for potential patients to call before going to the office. Our hope is that we are able to return to our regular school schedule in a short time.

Sincerely,  
*Shannon C. King*  
Superintendent  
Echols County Schools

**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**