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ABOVE: City High's doors remain closed as classes move online amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO BY NATALIE GREEN

## City High closes its doors

*All Iowa schools closed in March for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year*

By Shoshie Hemley

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds announced on April 17 that Iowa schools will remain closed for the rest of the school year. It was announced in early March, before spring break, that schools would remain closed till April 13th.

Three weeks after spring break, however, with the rise of COVID-19 cases in Iowa, the state extended the closures. In order to ensure the health and safety of both students and staff, they closed all of Iowa's 327 public school districts and 179 nonpublic schools.

"It was just really hard at first, but after the first week or so, it just kind of like, 'okay, this is how it is, and can't really do anything about it so far but stay home,'" Thomazin Jury '21 said.

Many students miss being at school, surrounded by peers and teachers.

"It makes you grateful for the things that you have for sure," Jury said.

For Principal John Bacon, the situation feels surreal.

"If you told me coming back from winter break that our school year was going to end at spring break, I'd never have believed you," Bacon said. "The whole world is just really trying to adjust to this unprecedented situation."

For the first few weeks of school closures, there were optional online enrichment choices for students. They were able to choose to continue to participate in their learning.

"For what the school has been

doing, they've been doing a great job of trying to adjust and make everyone feel safe. And that everything's gonna be okay," Jury said.

Following the announcement that schools were to remain closed, the district has now changed to an optional system that allows students multiple choices between taking a pass, or taking a GPA credit. Those who have chosen to continue with their learning will be engaging through online assignments and virtual meetings.

"The reality is [that] school is not over. And we are very proud of our staff. They're going where they've never gone before in a really short time frame, trying to be able to deliver quality online educational opportunities for kids," Bacon said. "All we can do is focus on those experiences being as rich and robust as possible in terms of the online educational experiences."

Official online schooling started for students on April 27.

"So far I think there's just a lot of confusion. I don't know if I should be ahead of schedule. It's just a lot of planning. So far I think it's gonna be okay. I'm not too worried about it. I think it'll be fine. It's just adding something new," Jury said.

The closures have resulted in numerous cancellations of events

for students, such as the spring musical, prom, and possibly graduation.

"I think about some amazing things that happen in our high school down the stretch of a school year from, the academic opportunities, to our spring musical, or final orchestra concert, to track meets, you name it," Bacon said. "We just have so many incredible things that happen each spring at City High, and to have those things not happen, it is very, very hard. There are countless stories of kids who have really worked hard for something, whose very special

time was coming, and now they don't get to do that."

Due to the fact that seniors are graduating City High without completing their final trimester at school in person, the community and school are

finding ways to honor the class of 2020 through ways such as yard signs and an Instagram account congratulating seniors on the colleges they've committed to.

"I think in terms of some of the other very special ceremonial activities that come with the end of the school year, I think we just need to be very creative and patient and try to make sure we're making the best decision possible," Bacon said.

Furthermore, according to Governor Reynolds's website, the Iowa

Department of Education will also waive instructional time requirements for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. This will require schools to submit a Return to Learn Plan to the Iowa Department of Education by July 1 outlining ways they will address disruptions to learning as a result of COVID-19. It will also waive the requirement that schools start no earlier than August 23.

"There's a lot of emotion connected to this. It's a hard thing, I think for a lot of people to have just such an abrupt end to being in person," Bacon said. "For some of the strong connections that exist to be interrupted like that, I think it's really hard on a lot of kids and staff alike."

Bacon would also like to plan a way for the school to feel more connected when the pandemic is over.

"I really am committed to some type of get-together once things open back up. I think it would be great if we could design a way to kind of come together, celebrate, let people be together, and get some sense of closure on our school year. I'm also really interested in planning some type of school celebration that can be held," Bacon said. "If not, then obviously we just continue to navigate this virtual world that we're in and make the best of it. [We'll] keep trying to find creative ways to allow our City High community to feel connected and engaged with each other during this unprecedented time."

For more information, visit the Iowa Department of Education's website on COVID-19 information and guidance.

## QUICK NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER  
THAT LEADS

### SAT

The June SAT date has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

### ACT

The April ACT date was postponed to June 13.

### MATILDA

The Drama Department's production of Matilda the Musical has been postponed to the spring of 2021.

### AP TESTS

All AP tests have been moved online in order for students to take at home. The exams will be only two questions and will be free response.

### MOCK TRIAL

Three of City High's mock trial teams qualified for state earlier in March at the regional competition making City High Mock Trial history. However, the Iowa State Bar Association cancelled the state competition due to COVID-19.

### SPRING SPORTS

Due to COVID-19, all spring sports have been cancelled.

### IOWA CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Iowa City Community School District is now providing optional online schooling for students.

### LIBRARY

The Iowa City Public Library is temporarily closed and not accepting returns. All fines are temporarily suspended.

### LH NEWS APP

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