March 11, 2020. 5:15pm.

Good evening. Things are moving fast. As the events surrounding COVID-19 develop at an accelerated rate, I felt it necessary to communicate to LaFontaine families about our actions and potential actions at our family of schools.

First, let me review.

Today, Governor Beshear advised school districts to be prepared for closure with less than 72 hours notice.

Beshear, "While we are not there yet, it is very possible that in the future we are going to ask schools in Kentucky to close down for a period of time. We want to be prepared."

Part of his concern are the vulnerable populations that children interact with.

He said, "Although coronavirus doesn't appear to be having a significant effect on children, the high number of people kids interact with means that we have to be very thoughtful as far as the school system."

CDC guidelines state that being over 60 or as a part of a vulnerable population includes those who have kidney, heart or lung disease or a compromised immune system.

Also today, Fayette Superintendent Manny Caulk said officials with the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department have assured school officials that there is not a public health risk to schools at this time, and do not recommend closures. He added, "As we have done in previous years, we are prepared to close schools if needed, but we have been advised by medical professionals that such a move is not warranted at this time."

Please note: The most recent public comment from Madison County Schools was on Friday, March 11. You can read it here. (I'll save you some reading. The events of this week and today have made this release outdated).

Here's how it affects LaFontaine schools and our families.

We don't intend to close our schools unless directed to.

We invite each of you to exercise personal judgement with regard to your family's best interest. Please consider the health of our school community in the case that your children show signs of illness or become ill.

Our judgement may be different if we had an entire state or school district under our stewardship as the officials quoted above do. However, our stewardship is much smaller and this affords us the ability to consider things differently.

Be advised, as this event develops we will continually reevaluate and make decisions that are best for our students, families, and community.

We work with 384 families at our schools. We are monitoring the health of our student and staff population closely. As of this writing, we have had 13 cases of the flu over the last 14 days. That's a 3% rate. For reference, Madison County Schools has a policy to close if their attendance drops below 80%. Again, we've been monitoring our serious illnesses closely.

We continue to use preventative measures to limit the spread of illness. These actions include:

- Hand sanitation at the beginning of every class rotation

- Sanitizing handrails and door handles twice a day
- Washing table surfaces twice per day and before meals and snacks
- Reminding children to cough or sneeze inside their shirt or in their elbow
- Schools are cleaned daily. Each weekend, each school receives a deeper cleaning.
- Bonus: It's a good time to rely on water bottles as our primary source of hydration. None of our schools have public fountains.

Tomorrow, a representative from each of our schools will attend a Department for Public Health-sponsored webinar for community partners on COVID-19 at the Madison County Health Department. We will continue to stay educated in order to make decisions that are in the best interest of our school community. The health and safety of your children are our primary concern.