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Dear Lexington Public Schools Community:

Many of you have questions about the spread of the novel coronavirus in the United States and our school district's response to it. The letter I write today marks the third in a series of communications to update you on the novel (new) coronavirus (named "COVID-19" by the World Health Organization). You may access my two previous communications here:

- [LPS Coronavirus Update 1](#)
- [LPS Coronavirus Update 2](#)

The most important information for me to convey to you at this time is the following message from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): **"For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low"** (see CDC's ["Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary"](#) updated February 29, 2020).

Background

As noted on their website, "the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, with the virus reportedly spreading from person-to-person in many parts of that country. Infections with COVID-19, most of them associated with travel from Wuhan, also are being reported in a growing number of [international locations](#), including the [United States](#). The [first confirmed instance of person-to-person spread](#) of COVID-19 in the United States with this virus was reported on January 30, 2020."

[Important COVID-19 Facts](#)

Naturally, the news of person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in the United States creates a sense of fear and uncertainty among us. One of the best ways to counteract our worries is to stay well-informed. The CDC has identified five (5) important facts that can help reduce the panic and stigma associated with COVID-19:

1. **The risk of getting COVID-19 in the United States is currently low.**
2. Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

3. Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.
4. You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the symptoms and signs (fever, cough, shortness of breath and travel to geographic areas at risk).
5. There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy
 - wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
 - stay home when you are sick;
 - cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

Lexington Public Schools COVID-19 Preparedness

We are following the CDC's [Interim Guidance](#) for schools which DO NOT have identified COVID-19 in their community. A summary of the ways we are planning, preparing, and responding to COVID-19 in the Lexington Public Schools follows.

1. LPS is in the process of reviewing, updating, and implementing emergency operations plans (EOPs). We have an established district-wide LPS Safety Team with representation from all schools, as well as school-based Emergency Response Teams. We will reconvene the district-wide and school-based safety and emergency response teams to review protocols and further assist with the dissemination of information.
2. We continue to work closely with the Lexington Board of Health (who works closely with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and great CDC) to share the most up-to-date COVID-19 information with the school community.
3. We are currently monitoring and planning for absenteeism of students and staff. To date, we have no attendance alerts to report, but we will immediately notify local health officials if anything changes. Students and staff who are sick are encouraged to stay home, and the district will continue to respond to these situations with flexibility.
4. We have well-established procedures for students and staff who are sick at school. As noted in my letter dated January 28, 2020:
 - Healthy school environments are always our top priority, and we work hard to stop the spread of unnecessary illnesses, such as the flu. As in the past, if a student has a fever, it is our school policy to send the child home immediately, and the child must remain home until they are fever-free for at least 24-hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Tylenol, Motrin, etc.)
 - We hold all of our staff to the same standards as students: we ask that any employee with fever go home for the day and stay home until they are fever-free for 24 hours (i.e., a temperature below 100 degrees without the use of fever-reducing medications).
5. We continue to perform routine environmental cleaning in our schools and district offices. As noted in my January 28, 2020 letter:

- Eliminating germs during flu season is an important preventative measure. We have instructed our custodians to be extra-vigilant, and they are in the process of cleaning and disinfecting our school buildings and central administrative offices.
6. We will continue to develop our communication plan for use with the school community. In addition to school community updates on any new COVID-19 developments, we will continue to actively encourage students or staff who are sick with a fever to stay home, and share proper preventative measures. All building leaders are asked to place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen. Finally, we are ensuring that adequate supplies are maintained in all our schools (e.g., soap and water, tissues, wipes, no-touch disposable receptacles, etc.).
 7. We will continue to share resources with students, staff, and families to help you understand COVID-19 and the steps you can take to protect yourself.
 - [What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).
 - [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).
 - [Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19](#).
 - CDC Information on [COVID-19 and children](#).
 - CDC information for staff, students, and their families who have recently traveled back to the United States from areas where CDC has identified community spread of coronavirus: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#). Please note that the CDC issued this communication on February 28, 2020.
 8. Diversity, equity, and inclusion remain important tenets and guiding principles in the Lexington Public Schools. We will continue to work to prevent stigma and discrimination in our school community. As members of the community, you can help by following the advice of the CDC: “To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described below to determine risk of COVID-19. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin, and be sure to maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed COVID-19. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. Updates are available on CDC’s web page at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/covid19.”

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, your child’s school nurse, or Ms. Karen Rufo, our Director of Student Health Services at (781) 861-2320 ext. 69191. We will continue to stay in touch with the Lexington Board of Health and go keep you updated on any critical developments. As always, thank you for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,



Julie Hackett, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Translations:

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