



LEXINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Lexington School Community:

Today, the Lexington Office of Public Health (LOPH) posted a statement “to educate the public about an emerging global health concern, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, 2019-n-COV. This is a new strain of Coronavirus, first detected in Wuhan, China. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that may cause respiratory illness in people. As of January 28, 2020, five cases of 2019-n-COV have been identified in the United States. There are currently no identified cases of infection in Massachusetts.” The LOPH will post additional Coronavirus updates to the Town website as they are received.

We recognize there is a great deal of anxiety about the situation and questions about the precautions we are taking in Lexington and the United States to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. We understand that people in China are taking extreme precautions to protect themselves from the transmission of the virus. We want you to know that we understand the concerns, and we take the matter seriously.

We have been fielding questions about the Coronavirus from community members and staff. Last night, we met with representatives of the Chinese American Association of Lexington (CAAL) and the Chinese Americans of Lexington (CALex) to discuss community concerns about possible exposure as a result of travel from China to Lexington. Today we learned that the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends avoiding non-essential travel to China. We realize that this information is coming at us in rapid succession and may be contributing to heightened levels of community concern.

We want to reassure you that we are working closely with the Lexington Office of Public Health, and they are closely monitoring emerging information from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the CDC. Additionally, we have put several preventative measures in place to keep LPS students and staff safe and healthy, including the following:

- As you know, we are in the midst of cold and flu season; Ms. Karen Rufo, our Director of School Health Services, and our school nurses regularly send helpful prevention tips and updates to families, monitor absentee rates, and conduct infectious disease surveillance.
- 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.
- For those who wish to have more information about the Coronavirus, we have gathered helpful tips and preventative measures you can take to learn more and protect yourself and your family (see attached).

- 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).

Please know that we take matters of public health seriously, and we are closely monitoring the situation. We have received a few inquiries from families and staff members about wearing protective face masks while in school. Others have asked if we will waive attendance policies for those who may be worried about exposure to the Coronavirus. There is no information to suggest that either of these practices is necessary at this time. If such precautionary measures are needed, rest assured that the Lexington Office of Public Health would notify us immediately, as they did in 2009 with the H1N1 outbreak. If you feel you have a unique circumstance that requires special consideration (e.g., an illness coupled with recent travel from China to Lexington), you may contact your school nurse or Ms. Karen Rufo, LPS Director of Student Health Services at 781-861-2320, Ext. 69191.

We are well-aware of the emerging global health concerns, and you need to know that there is no public health threat at this time. We want to reassure you that if there are any further developments, we will be sure to let you know immediately. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, and you can expect an update from us by no later than February 4, 2020.

Sincerely,



Julie L. Hackett, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Translations:

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