

March 10, 2020

Dear Members of the Leicester Community,

As local news outlets continue to report, some spread of the Coronavirus continues to take place, impacting a small but growing number of schools and communities across the Commonwealth. In keeping with our commitment to open communication with our staff and families, below is an update with regard to the Leicester Public Schools. Please know that we remain confident that our students and staff are safe in our schools and we will continue to make decisions that are in their best interest. To that end, I will be providing updates to you as necessary.

We were notified late yesterday that a family member of a Leicester employee has a presumptive positive test for COVID-19. Please know that the family member does NOT live with the Leicester employee, the employee is not exhibiting any symptoms and in consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) last evening, they have absolutely no concerns about this impacting the students or staff of the Leicester High School. Although not believed necessary at all by MDPH or our local Board of Health, the employee will self-quarantine for 14 days.

We share this with you to keep you informed and to remind you of the steps, as outlined in the memo shared with all of you on March 3, 2020, that we continue to keep our students and staff safe and please know that we do believe they are just that: safe.

There are general precautions we should all take, as per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), to remain as healthy as possible:

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use Alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. You can also cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick whenever possible.
- Practice other good health habits: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Ongoing coordination with the Town of Leicester, the Leicester Board of Health and Pertinent State Offices

As also noted in the memo of March 3rd, we remain in close contact with Leicester's Board of Health, and we are staying abreast of guidance being provided by the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance, Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Such coordination will be ongoing.

Plan for cleaning impacted buildings and buses

We have instructed our custodial staff to be diligent in cleaning of the buildings. To that end, last week they began a program to sanitize and disinfect each building on an ongoing rotating basis for each school each week.

Confidentiality

As with any medical information, confidentiality about our staff, students, and families must be maintained at all times according to federal regulations.

Resources for talking with children about COVID-19

Concern over COVID-19 can make children and families anxious. An important message is for children to know that adults at home and school are taking care of their health and safety. Here are some websites that you may

find useful: <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-children-about-the-coronavirus-2020030719111> and [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource). We will continue to work together - home, school and community - to do all that we can to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Moving Forward

We will continue to provide you with weekly updates, but please be reminded of these important steps, as noted above:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If unable to wash with soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (not with your hands);
- Stay away from people who are sick; and
- Stay home when you are sick and please keep your children home from school when they are sick.

Anyone who is ill should please remain at home and we ask that you please consult with your primary care physician if you have any questions or concerns about sending your child to school.

Anytime there is an outbreak of a virus or illness, it can be very unsettling for families and staff, but know that keeping everyone informed, safe and healthy remains our priority. This situation is evolving and we encourage everyone to monitor the following websites for the latest information: Mass Department of Public Health at www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov and the Auburn Board of Health at <https://www.auburnguide.com/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=164>.

As always, we remain deeply committed to student and staff wellness. Working together – home, school and community – we will continue to do our very best to keep everyone safe and healthy and we thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Tencza, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools