February 26, 2020

Good morning –

I am writing today to inform you of steps the Yarmouth School Department is taking, or preparing to take, in the event of a coronavirus outbreak in our community. While the likelihood of such an event is quite low, we have been advised by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to have plans in place and to communicate with staff, students, and parents steps they may take to prevent the spread of this and other illnesses.

**What is Coronavirus?**

Coronavirus is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which has now been detected in 37 locations internationally, including the United States. The virus is named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes is named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19"). The United States reported the first confirmed instance of person-to-person spread with this virus on January 30, 2020. (<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>)

**What does the disease look like in humans?**

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include fever and/or cough and difficulty breathing. Sore throat is also reported in some patients. If you have these symptoms and did not recently travel to China or did not have contact with someone with 2019 Novel Coronavirus, it is likely to be a cold or the flu.

**What is the best way to prevent the spread of the disease?**

If you are sick you should stay home, cover your coughs and sneezes, and wash your hands regularly. If your child has a fever, please keep them home until at least 24-hours after the fever has subsided without the use of fever-reducing medicines, such as acetaminophen. This standard is expected of staff as well.

**What can the schools do to help prevent the spread of this and other diseases?**

Aside from educational memos such as this, and our work at school each day reminding students and staff of precautionary measures mentioned above, we are also determined to ensure that commonly touched surfaces throughout the schools (desktops, doorknobs, drinking fountains, etc.) are disinfected each day. We are also conferring with medical professionals in the area to determine other steps we may take to assist in stopping this disease before an outbreak occurs.

**What if there is an outbreak in our community?**

If there is a local outbreak, we must be prepared to close schools for an undetermined period of time. The decision to close school will likely be made for us by the Maine CDC and will be based upon the percentage of students who are sick, and the likelihood of the disease to spread. If schools are closed, and in order to allow for continued learning and completion of the school year in a reasonable timeframe, we will consider options made available to us by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE). This may include distance learning opportunities, extended-day make-up time, and other options approved by MDOE. These are options that have been discussed at the leadership level within the schools previously, and we will be updating those options more specifically in the coming days to determine which would be most appropriate for our schools.

Please know that, as of this morning, the Maine CDC website reports that, “Maine has no confirmed cases for 2019-nCoV and no patients under investigation at this time. Maine CDC is working with U.S. CDC to monitor the situation, provide healthcare providers with the latest information, and stay up-to-date on any potential cases they may see. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. This is a rapidly evolving situation and information will be updated as it becomes available. For more information on the situation, visit [U.S. CDC's COVID-19 situation summary webpage](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html).”

The best thing we can do at this time is remind everyone to stay home if sick, cover up any coughs or sneezes, wash hands regularly, and contact their doctor with any concerns or questions.

On a related note, I am pleased to inform you that, at present, the incident rates of student absences due to cold- and flu-like illnesses is quite low at each of our schools, with each school reporting illness rates between 1.1% and 3.7%.

I will be back in touch to inform you of any local developments as necessary.

Sincerely,



Andrew Dolloff, Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools