



March 2, 2020

Dear Region 16 Community,

We are monitoring closely the evolving news concerning the outbreak of COVID-19, otherwise known as coronavirus, that the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a public health emergency of global concern.

This week, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) advised American businesses and schools to begin preparing for the possibility of a larger outbreak of COVID-19 within the United States. At Region 16, the safety of our students, staff, and families is our top priority. We are carefully assessing and pursuing the preparatory steps that are appropriate for our community. We are committed to following the guidance and advice from experts - including the CDC, WHO, and local health officials - so that our policies and practices are informed by the strongest evidence available.

As you seek to stay abreast of COVID-19 and discuss it with your children, the following are some helpful sources of reliable information:

[Center for Disease Control](#)

[The State Department](#)

[The World Health Organization](#)

[Explaining the news to our kids \(Common Sense Media\)](#)

The CDC site emphasizes that individual risk is dependent on exposure and points out: "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. ... While the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat. It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed."

The CDC site defines everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses - which we share with our community regularly - to include:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child gets sick with a respiratory illness, like flu, limit contact with others as much as possible to help prevent spreading illness. Stay home (or keep your child home) for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to seek medical care or for other necessities. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- If an outbreak of flu or other illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures."

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We will continue to take the precautions we regularly put in place during the flu season, including washing hands, cleaning surfaces, and supporting our students and staff who stay out of school when they are sick. Please monitor your child for any symptoms of illness, see a medical professional as needed, and keep your child at home if there is fever, stomach flu, or other signs of a virus. This care as a community will help us all stay healthier. We appreciate your help.

We also will continue to share updates on any additional steps we take to help keep our community safe. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to one of our school nurses.

Thank you for your partnership!

Sincerely,

Michael P. Yamin

Superintendent of Schools