

CRC to ALL STAFF – 3/5/20

From: Chancellor Richard Carranza <NYCChancellor@schools.nyc.gov>

Sent: Thursday, March 5 2020 1:20 PM

Subject: Coronavirus Update (3/5)

ATTACHMENTS: 1) COVID-19 Fact Sheet; 2) COVID-19 Flyer

Dear DOE Colleagues,

In recent days, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has confirmed the first cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) connected to New York City. While we all hoped this moment would not come, it was something the City has meticulously prepared for. At this time, it is important to listen to facts and not respond to fear - you do NOT need to:

- Limit travel within the city;
- Change anything about where you get food or how you prepare it;
- Avoid public gatherings or public transportation; or
- Wear a face mask if you are healthy (face masks are only recommended if directed by a health care provider).

Preparation and Protocols in Place

The health and safety of all of our students and staff continues to be our first priority. Working in close partnership with the Health Department, we will continue to update our protocols as the situation evolves, and communicate about any possible impact. Measures taken in schools and other DOE sites include:

- Increasing deep cleanings to two times per week, disinfecting surface areas with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-approved cleaning disinfectant;
- Increasing deep cleanings in schools to two times per week, disinfecting surface areas;
- Ensuring that all 1,800 schools have adequate hygiene and cleaning materials so that bathrooms are continuously stocked with soap and paper towels;
- Confirming that COVID-19-related absences will not impact applications to middle or high schools for the current or the coming year;
- Supplying all schools with facemasks to be used if a student or staff member exhibits symptoms and requires isolation prior to transport to a doctor and/or testing;
- Strongly encouraging students to take time for handwashing, especially before meals; monitoring this and making changes as needed to ensure students have the time;
- Issuing updated guidance on international travel for school trips, including canceling all DOE-sponsored international trips to the following countries with a level-2 or higher advisory alert from the CDC: China, South Korea, Italy, Iran, and Japan; and
- Consistent with guidance from the CDC and NYSED, advising the cancellation of all study abroad programs; this includes where students are scheduled to come from other countries to stay with host families in NYC, and where DOE public school students are hosted abroad.

There are no plans to close schools or offices at this time. This is an extreme measure that can be disruptive to day-to-day life, and the decision to implement will only be taken at the direction of public health experts.

Important Precautions

As a reminder, it is critical that all New Yorkers continue to practice general viral infection prevention measures including:

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or sleeve
- Wash your hands regularly
- Avoid touching your face
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Get your flu shot – it's never too late
- Stay home if you're feeling sick. Call your doctor and let them know your symptoms and travel history.

If You Have Been Traveling

Per CDC recommendations posted 3/4/2020, travelers returning from affected countries (currently China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea) identified by CDC should stay home for 14 days from the time they left the affected country and monitor their health and avoid contact with others. If returning travelers from affected countries develop fever, cough or trouble breathing, they should call their medical provider and tell them about their symptoms and recent travel.

These recommendations apply to any travelers returning after 12:00pm on 3/4/2020. Please monitor the CDC.gov website for updates on affected countries here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>.

Staff Timekeeping

We understand there are many questions around timekeeping given this rapidly evolving situation. Guidance around staff absences related to coronavirus will be issued in the near future.

Resources to Stay Informed and Fight Bias

I encourage you to read the [Fact Sheet](#) and flyer attached to this letter for more information, or visit nyc.gov/coronavirus at any time for important updates— including ways to fight stigma and bias around this issue. It's important we come together as school communities and support one another as neighbors and New Yorkers during this time. COVID-19 is not more likely found in any one race or nationality, and we must each model inclusion and actively work to combat bias in our workplaces and communities.

The health and safety of our students and staff continues to be our chief priority, and we will follow all guidance and take all appropriate measures accordingly, keeping you informed at every turn.

In unity,
Richard