

CRC to all principals + ESs, Supts, BCO EDs – 3/5/20

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

Sent: Thursday, March 5 2020 1:19 PM

Subject: Coronavirus Update (3/5)

ATTACHMENTS: None (hyperlinks throughout):

Dear Colleagues,

We know that New York City's first reported cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) have put many New Yorkers on edge. The health and safety of all of our students and staff members continues to be our first priority, and we are actively working with our partners at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to monitor the situation.

In a time of anxiety, it is up to all of us to lead and model for our communities the importance of listening to facts and not responding to fear.

I want to be clear that I take COVID-19 precautions very seriously—and I am counting on you to do so as well. Your school communities will look to you for guidance and information, and I am committed to supporting you in this.

Please see below information, and share our updated parent letter with families tomorrow; it can be found on our website this afternoon along with the other [family letters](#).

Preparation and Protocols in Place

We are enhancing certain protocols and providing additional resources to schools, including:

- Increasing deep cleanings in schools to two times per week, disinfecting surface areas with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-approved cleaning disinfectant;
- 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.

You have also received extensive [guidance for principals](#) that covers general preparedness, resources, recommended virus-control practices for schools, and more. We are now providing you a

[comprehensive checklist](#) with specific steps to follow for prevention, planning, training, handling the occurrence of symptoms in your school, and more. Please review this checklist immediately, and keep it close at hand.

Guidance for Nurses and Custodians

In addition, we have prepared guidance documents tailored to school personnel with particularly important roles in addressing this challenge, including:

- [Practices and procedures for nurses and health providers](#). Consistent with standard procedure, staff should continue to send home students with respiratory symptoms and fever. If there is concern that a student may have novel coronavirus infection, medical providers should call the NYC Department of Health Provider Access Line at 1-866-692-3641.

An important note: if your school does not have a nurse and a student is sick with a fever and cough or shortness of breath, staff should ask the student to wear a face mask, call for parental pick up, and recommend calling a medical provider for instructions. Any student with respiratory symptoms and fever should wait with an adult in a room with a closed door, away from other students. And the adult waiting with the child should be provided with a mask and stay at least 3 feet away from the child in the room.

- [Cleaning procedures for custodial engineers](#). Custodial engineers and building managers should regularly disinfect bathrooms, cafeteria, and common area doorknobs on a regular basis. They should also ensure the building is properly ventilated, including opening all windows periodically.

Communicating with Families

Clear and consistent communication with families is of critical importance. Information has been shared with parents via [family letters](#) backpacked home in recent days, on social media, and City websites, which will continue to be updated daily. Here is a list of resources with family-facing information on COVID-19:

- DOHMH's main [coronavirus page](#);
- DOE's [coronavirus updates](#);
- [Coronavirus FAQ](#) for NYC schools and families; and a
- [General fact sheet](#) on COVID-19, available in multiple languages at nyc.gov/coronavirus under "Additional Resources."

Guidance for Travelers

Per CDC recommendations posted 3/4/2020, travelers returning from affected countries (currently China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea) identified by the 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 CDC.gov website for updates on affected countries here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>.

Important Precautions

It is vitally important that we all routinely employ infection prevention strategies to block the transmission of common respiratory viruses. That means strongly encouraging all staff and students to:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (in the absence of a tissue, cough or sneeze into your shirt sleeve or bent arm).
- Keep your hands clean (wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get the flu shot (at this time, there are no current vaccinations for coronaviruses).
- Display student-friendly “Cover Your Cough” posters at appropriate locations throughout your school in appropriate languages to encourage general infection control.

These precautions extend to current and upcoming Parent-Teacher Conferences. Please encourage family members to stay home if they are not feeling well, and assure them that another time for conferencing will be made available so they do not have to worry about missing the opportunity to connect with their child’s teacher.

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

You will find critical updates at nyc.gov/coronavirus 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 within schools.

Finally, please join me on a webinar **tomorrow, Friday, March 6 at 9:00am** with experts from DOHMH, who will discuss the virus and important protocols we have put into place to mitigate risk to school communities. Attendance at the webinar is mandatory for all school leaders – we will share details on how to join shortly.

The health and safety of our students and staff members continues to be our highest priority, and we will follow all guidance and take all appropriate measures accordingly. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our communities safe, and for taking the lead on communicating this critical information to your families and staff members.

In unity,
Richard

BCC includes:

All Principals (DIIT)

BCO EDs

All Supts

Exec Sups