



March 10, 2020

Dear Palisades Community,

The Bucks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) arranged a conference call with county officials to provide school entities with an update on the current state of COVID-19 . Participating in the call were Dr. David Damsker, Director of the Bucks County Health Department, Scott Forester, Director of Bucks County Emergency Management Services along with BCIU representatives, superintendents and administrators from each of the thirteen school districts in the county.

As a result of that discussion, I would like to update you on the following:

Impact on Education:

Student trips

Upon the recommendation of the Dr. Damsker, Director of the Bucks County Health Department, all Bucks County superintendents were advised to cancel all district international travel out of the country for any students or staff. To that end, **upcoming trips to Mexico (AP Biology) and Costa Rica (PALMS Eco-Teach) are now cancelled.** If your children were scheduled for those trips, the trip advisor will be in contact with you.

I also spoke with the advisors for the trip to Europe slated for July. This is not a school sponsored trip so the advisors will work directly with the travel company to make a determination by May 1st if the trip is still occurring.

Domestic field trips (at the current time) will continue as planned.

School closures

As stated last week, I continue to monitor any adverse effects on our educational programs. At the current time, all school district buildings will remain open and there are no plans to cancel or alter any extracurricular activities. If an outside organization cancels an event, your child's advisor will notify you directly.

In the future, we may receive direction from Dr. Damsker (Department of Health) or other health authority, to cancel large gatherings scheduled to be held in the buildings or on school grounds. More information would follow, in that case.

If I needed to cancel school for a deep cleaning, that day or those days will be made up as we have made up other school closures. Please refer to the district calendar for snow makeup

days. Now is the time to create your family plan should some or all of our schools have to close.

Again, while the district has supplied a majority of our students with devices (grades 4 through 12) and our secondary teachers use Canvas (an online learning management system) to facilitate student learning, virtual learning days will not be our initial approach to make up for lost days. There are several reasons for this, but primarily because we must educate all of our students K-12 when school is open. Notably, we have not provided Chromebooks to our primary-aged students (K-3) and delivering instruction exclusively online will not support all of our students (K-12) who have unique learning needs. I await further guidance from the PA Department of Education regarding any changes to current legislation on instructional time and flexible instructional days.

Volunteers

Anyone who is scheduled to visit or volunteer in one of our buildings should do so only if they are showing no flu symptoms and are not immune-compromised.

Cleaning Protocols:

In addition to the cleaning protocols described last week, the district ordered additional cases of disinfecting wipes that were distributed to each school building yesterday. Our full order was not fulfilled initially, so the remaining cases will be distributed when they arrive.

A student-friendly video was shared with all students to explain how viruses spread as well as protocols for reducing the spread of the disease (hand washing, coughing and sneezing into arm, etc.). You can access the video [here](#). Posters are hung throughout our buildings to reinforce proper hand washing protocols.

Krapf Transportation is also committed to enhanced disinfecting practices in their vehicles particularly in “high touch” areas including handrails, seat backs, steering wheels and dash areas.

Please know that I will continue to update you of any changes and updates. Additional information from the Department of Health regarding COVID-19 can be found below my signature.

Thank you for your help in keeping our schools and community safe.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bridget O'Connell
Superintendent

Status of Current Cases of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in Pennsylvania

- There are eleven (11) presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.
- Counties impacted to-date include one individual from Delaware County, eight individuals from Montgomery County, one individual from Monroe County, and one individual from Wayne County.
- **There are no diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in Bucks County.**
- All individuals who have been diagnosed in Pennsylvania, were exposed to the virus by direct contact with a diagnosed individual residing outside of the country or outside of the Commonwealth.
- **There is no community spread of the virus in Bucks County at this time.**
- Children are not believed to be at a serious risk for the illness, and to-date not a single individual worldwide, under the age of fifteen, has died from the virus.
- Those who have the highest risk are individuals with a weakened immune system; pregnant women; and/or those age 60 and over.

Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the common flu virus and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

These symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as fourteen or more days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from individuals with no symptom to becoming severely ill and dying.

How the Virus is Spread

The virus is spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it

How to Protect You and Your Family

The single best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is by washing your hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds several times throughout the day.

Other ways to help prevent the spread of the illness include:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. **Do not use your hands!**
- Use a 60% or higher alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes and other frequently touched items.
- Contain: If you are sick, stay home until you feel better. Sick students and/or staff should not return to school until they are fever-free for a minimum of twenty-four hours without medication.