



March 3, 2020

Dear Palisades Community,

This morning I had the opportunity to attend a countywide forum to discuss community response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) hosted by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit. Amongst those attending were personnel from the Bucks County Health Department, Bucks County Emergency Services, all six Bucks County hospitals, all thirteen Bucks County School Districts and three Career and Technical Centers (CTCs), Delaware Valley University, and the Bucks County Community College.

As I write this message, there are no known or reported cases of COVID-19 in Bucks County or Pennsylvania. I learned that COVID-19 is relatively mild in children and presents as a common cold; however, this virus is particularly dangerous as you get older, and the elderly (over 80 years old) have the highest mortality risk.

Response to Infectious Diseases:

Palisades has policy and procedures in place to respond to a variety of communicable diseases. Currently, if a student or staff member presents with an infectious disease, our school nurse contacts the Bucks County Department of Health for guidance on possible exclusions to minimize a potential outbreak situation. In the case of COVID-19, the Bucks County Department of Health will notify us of any confirmed cases of this disease in our region and will provide guidance and information for distribution to families.

Please refer to the following links for access to Board policy and information that has been on our website regarding our handling of a variety of communicable diseases:

Policy 203 -Immunizations and Communicable Diseases

<http://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pali/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=AN5GKE442C47>

Outbreaks, Diseases & Conditions Information

https://www.palisd.org/departments/health_services/outbreaks_diseases_and_conditions_information

Cleaning Protocols:

Since we are currently in high-flu season, our schools already practice enhanced cleaning procedures each day, and the Bucks County Health Department offered assurances this morning that those cleaning procedures will successfully kill the virus

on contact surfaces such as desks, table tops, railings, etc. Our current protocol is to wipe all hard surfaces 3-4 times per week with an effective disinfectant which has a residual property of up to 7 days. Our custodial crew also uses Victory sprayers which cover all surfaces with a fine, chlorine-based mist. Additionally, we will be coordinating our flu response efforts with Krapf Bus Company to focus on the “high touch” areas including the tops of bus seats and railings.

Impact on Education:

As this situation develops, I will continue to monitor any adverse effects on our educational programs. If there would be a need to close schools for any extended period of time, the Department of Health and the Department of Education will provide guidance on the duration of a closure. At this point, there are no plans to close school for an extended period of time or cancel sporting events, plays or graduation.

If I were required to close school, I would first determine how many days are remaining prior to June 30th to meet the state mandated 180 day requirement. The state also allows for a minimum hour requirement per year which I would also review as an option. 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.

Regarding international travel for students, we will follow the travel warning notices posted by the CDC on the following site: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. Based on the warning level posted on this site, decisions will be made regarding the continuation or cancellation of a trip so that the health of our students and staff is not jeopardized. Hypothetically speaking, if we had planned a trip to Italy for students this spring, we would cancel the trip based on the Warning Level 3 declared on the CDC travel notices web site (see chart for Warning Level descriptions).

Types of Notices

Warning Level 3	Warning Level 3 (Red): Avoid all non-essential travel to this destination. The outbreak is of high risk to travelers and no precautions are available to protect against the identified increased risk.
Alert Level 2	Alert Level 2 (Yellow): Practice enhanced precautions for this destination. The Travel Health Notice describes additional precautions added, or defines a specific at-risk population.
Watch Level 1	Watch Level 1 (Green): Practice usual precautions for this destination, as described in the Travel Health Notice and/or on the destination page . This includes being up-to-date on all recommended vaccines and practicing appropriate mosquito avoidance.

Currently, we are not restricting any domestic trips but if the venue closes due to health concerns (Disney, Ellis Island, museums, etc.) we will cancel those trips. Either the building principal or trip advisors will notify those families affected by a closure.

I will continue to share information as it becomes available. You can access the most current information and prevention tips posted online concerning the COVID-19 by visiting the web pages listed at the end of this message.

As always, thank you for your attention and your support of our schools.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bridget O'Connell
Superintendent

More about COVID-19:

You can find more information about the coronavirus at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC Website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html))¹ which is updated frequently with information about the coronavirus. The CDC also offers helpful [FAQs](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html)² about the coronavirus. In addition, the [PA Department of Health Coronavirus Website](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx)³ is a good source of information. Some tips from the website to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, such as coronavirus, include:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. Do not use your hands!
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use a 60% or higher alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, electronic devices, remotes, and other frequently touched items.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

³ <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

