



## Health Alert: COVID-19

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is monitoring the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are working closely with the Fairfax County Health Department and following the guidance of public health professionals on steps we must take to protect the health and safety of our students, staff and community. At this time, all FCPS schools are open and operating on a normal schedule.

Dear FCPS Families and Staff,

As COVID-19 circumstances continue to evolve, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is working with the Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) to implement sound public health recommendations and share updated information with the community, as it becomes available. We learned yesterday at the FCHD briefing that the risk to the general public remains low – even though we have two confirmed cases in the county.

This letter contains several new developments and includes a [video message](#) from School Board Chair Karen Corbett Sanders and me.

Here are the latest updates:

Today, my office shared with the School Board the latest information regarding our response to COVID-19. We have developed a COVID response team led by the district's chief operating officer to formulate an overall crisis response strategy for schools and departments. This team is meeting



regularly to review updates from FCHD, prioritize division wide matters, develop internal and external communication protocols, and implement the FCPS Pandemic Influenza Response Plan (currently under review by FCHD).

The plan addresses the specific activities necessary to keep schools open and operating while providing a clean and safe environment during an outbreak and the essential functions that must be performed by FCPS, if schools are closed.

The plan utilizes two planning scenarios:

- Planning Scenario 1: Under this scenario, a large percentage of the division's schools are in session but a single school or a small group of schools may have dismissed students from classes to limit/restrict social contact and slow the transmission of the influenza virus. The superintendent may authorize the dismissal of students from class based on recommendations from the local health department director. Instructional program support and division-wide support services may be limited due to high absenteeism rate or the redeployment of staff.
- Planning Scenario 2: Schools are closed. Under this scenario, students have been dismissed from school either by order of the state health commissioner to limit/restrict social contact and slow the transmission of the influenza virus or by order of the Division Superintendent or the School Board due to falling class attendance and/or rising staff absenteeism. FCPS facilities may remain open to faculty and staff to support continuity of learning.

There are "snow days" built into the FCPS school year calendar that could be utilized if schools need to be closed for any length of time.

School closing decisions would be made in coordination with the health professionals.

Today's presentation to the School Board is available on our [coronavirus webpage](#). The page also contains fact sheets, videos, and other resources that you may find useful. Additional information is available from the [Fairfax County Health Department](#) and the [CDC](#).

The CDC is recommending that individuals returning to the U.S. from South Korea or Italy after March 4, 2020 self-quarantine for 14 calendar days. This is in addition to FCHD monitored 14-day quarantines for individuals who have been to China and Iran. As families make plans for spring break, we strongly encourage you to keep travel issues and potential challenges in mind.

Beginning today, FCPS is implementing a travel history questionnaire. Students who have traveled to these four countries will not be able to newly enroll or return to school for 14 days after returning to the U.S. For our current students who have been advised to self-quarantine, we have directed schools to follow existing procedures for providing instructional materials to students during short-term absences.

Based on CDC guidance, and in an abundance of caution, all FCPS-sponsored international field trips and short-term international visitations have been suspended through June 30, 2020, effective immediately.

Currently, there are no travel restrictions for locations within the U.S. However, FCPS is continuing to work closely with the FCHD and monitoring CDC guidance in this evolving situation. FCPS understands that some parents or guardians may have concerns regarding their child's participation in field trips. Student participation in instructional or student activity field trips is always optional and at the discretion of the parent or guardian.

We have a team working on a tiered plan to address instruction if there are school closures. We recognize that some of our families lack access to computers and internet access at home and we will make available through local schools loaner laptops and mobile hotspot devices (MiFi), if needed. In addition, we are considering the potential impact on staff members who may be unable to provide instruction in the event of a school closure due to their personal health or responsibilities to care for a family member.

The instruction plan addresses both short-term and longer term scenarios that would include the possibility of distance learning. To prepare for that possibility, we are considering scheduling a teacher training day/student holiday in the near future to provide distance learning training to all instructional personnel. More information will be shared with you as that plan is developed.

The Health Department is conducting contact investigations throughout the community to determine any potential exposures to individuals with people who tested positive for COVID-19. To this point, the health department has not communicated direct connections to illness with FCPS. If parents or staff are contacted by health department personnel, they should follow instructions and notify staff with this information.



Remember, the following every day actions can help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

We have directed our schools to find time to allow students to wash their hands throughout the day and reiterate the importance of students and staff staying home if they are not feeling well.

We recognize the importance of the free and reduced meals to our students and families and the planning scenarios include how the food programs could be maintained if the coronavirus impacts the operations of one or more schools.

Our existing school cleaning protocols utilize hospital-grade cleaning products that can kill the COVID-19 virus and we have a 6-month supply of these products available today.

If you have questions about the illness or symptoms, or how to prevent respiratory infections, we encourage you to talk with a Communicable Disease Nurse at the Fairfax County Health Department during business hours. The phone number is 703-267-3511.

We recognize that uncertainty creates anxiety. We want to remind our community that coronavirus doesn't recognize race, nationality, or ethnicity. Having Asian ancestry – or any other ancestry – does not make a person more vulnerable to this illness. We can fight stigma and support others by sharing accurate information and staying informed through reputable, trusted sources.

We strongly encourage our families to stay informed and stay calm. We will continue to provide you frequent updates as new information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Scott Brabrand, Superintendent  
Fairfax County Public Schools

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Parents of FCPS students may update contact information online through [weCare@School](mailto:weCare@School) a feature of [FCPS 24-7 Learning: Parent View](#) (Blackboard) or by contacting the student information officer at their child(ren)'s school to have the contact information updated in the student information system.

FCPS employees may update contact information through [UConnect](#).

Individuals with no affiliation to the school system must fill out the [Removal Request](#) to have their contact information removed from eNotify.