



COUNTY OF BEDFORD, VIRGINIA

School Administration Building

310 South Bridge Street

Bedford, VA. 24523

March 11, 2020

Dear Parents,

We are reaching out to provide information about COVID-19 (coronavirus) and specifically our school district's plans and responses to potential cases that become present in our community. The safety and well-being of our students and employees is always our top priority, and we want to ensure that you all have the most accurate and up to date information.

General information on COVID-19

As of today, 9 COVID-19 cases have been identified in our state with no identifications for our region. The cases that are identified in Virginia are related to individuals who have traveled to regions of concern or had close contact with those travelers. COVID-19 is NOT airborne and is transmitted through respiratory droplets (from a cough or sneeze) that may contaminate someone in close contact (6 feet) or contaminate a surface and then be transferred to face by touch. The symptoms are most commonly fever, cough and shortness of breath. Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are most at-risk for infection. Additional information on COVID-19 can be obtained through the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and [Virginia Department of Health](#) (VDH). If you are unable to access the information online, please contact our school offices and we can send materials home to you.

Preventive Personal Measures

Right now, the [CDC guidance](#) is emphasizing preventive controls referred to as NPIs (non-pharmaceutical interventions) with primary targets of self-protection and environmental care. It is imperative that we continue to provide our learners appropriate education relating to COVID-19 with calm but informative guidance on healthy habits to prevent spread of flu and viral conditions. We want you, as a parent, to help partner with us to ensure we can inform, protect and support our learners by reinforcing the following preventative measures

- Wash hands often with soap/water and for 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your mouth, nose, eyes with unwashed hands.
- If hand-washing is not possible, ensure hand sanitizing with a product of at least 60% alcohol.
- Practice healthy sneeze/cough coverages, closely placing your mouth at the elbow or using a tissue. Tissues should be discarded to trash immediately and hands washed. Support staff should wear gloves to empty the entire trash bag without touching the contents of trash cans.

Our school staff have also been provided guidance from the CDC on environmental measures to reduce risk exposure through contact in schools, including [proper technique](#) for hand-washing or sanitizing to ensure optimal protections. We will also make every effort to ensure that students who display contagious concerns are managed properly. This could include temporary isolation to the clinic, using masks for respiratory concerns, and/or requests for immediate parent pick-up.

In addition, it is extremely important that all adults and students remain at home when sick, especially if showing any fever or respiratory symptoms. Parents are advised that all Bedford County Public Schools will eliminate the practices of perfect attendance awards and incentives. This precaution will remove any risk of

students or families feeling unwarranted pressure to be present at school if sick or symptomatic. Absences due to illness, and physician recommended quarantine or related restrictions will be excused absences. Individuals without exposure through travel, identified contact risk or active symptoms should not self-isolate simply to avoid public spaces. Schools will make every effort to minimize the impact of any time away from school by providing at-home assignments or access to instructional supports for excused absences.

Division Planning and Preparation

There is no indication that COVID-19 is a seasonal concern and weather does not currently appear to be an influence. Therefore, planned responses need to measure safety and potential for long-term monitoring. Our school staff is working with community providers, including VDH officials, local health agencies and emergency responders to promote community planning and responses. At this time, because there are no confirmed cases in the region, cancelling school events is not required nor recommended by health officials.

Should there be a confirmed case in the region, the CDC recommends that schools consult with VDH and evaluate the responses that may be appropriate to each individual school and community. In the event that one or more schools are closed, buildings *may* stay open for staff members (unless ill) while students stay home. Keeping facilities open a) allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely and b) allows other staff members to continue to provide services, like nutrition programs for eligible students. Other actions may include temporary cancellation of events in our local region (i.e. extra-curricular events with travel) and temporary cancellation of public events (i.e. performances or public meetings).

The division is evaluating future events that involve school-related travel outside of the state and local region and, at this time, will eliminate international travel through school-sponsored trips. This is a difficult decision but one that is determined to be in the best interest of our students and families.

Responsible Communication

Speculation and misinformation about COVID-19 has created an environment of fear for some students, parents, and community members. That misinformation has the potential to lead to discrimination and/or harassment against some groups of students and families based on ethnicity, race, and national origin. Please notify school administration of any discrimination and/or harassment towards any student.

Our websites have provided information to parents on [how to talk with children about COVID-19](#) and the School Counselors have provided developmental resources on this topic to ease any student anxiety with the public health news so prevalent in the media. If you need printed materials, please contact the school for assistance.

Family Travel Decisions

With the upcoming Spring Break, we have received several questions from parents in relation to family travel. Please understand that we cannot provide any specific decision for your family. However, at this time in Virginia, any quarantine and isolation is a recommendation and is self-imposed. [CDC maintains travel advisories based on region](#):

Warning Level 3: CDC recommends travelers avoid all nonessential travel to destinations with level 3 travel notices because of the risk of getting COVID-19.

Alert Level 2: Because COVID-19 can be more serious in older adults and those with chronic medical conditions, people in these groups should talk to a healthcare provider and consider postponing travel to destinations with level 2 travel notices.

Watch Level 1: CDC does not recommend canceling or postponing travel to destinations with level 1 travel notices because the risk of COVID-19 is thought to be low. If you travel, take preventive precautions.

CDC recommends travelers, particularly those with underlying health issues, defer all cruise ship travel at this time.

We hope this information is helpful for your family and outlines our school's commitment to keeping your child safe. We will be providing periodic updates as we monitor the situation and receive additional guidance from the Department of Health and other community partners. Please contact your child's school if you have any concerns related to your child or if you have any further questions.