

Dear CPS Community:

We understand that many staff, students and families have questions regarding the recent outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 and how it may impact the CPS Community. Also known as COVID-19, Massachusetts-specific information about Coronavirus can be found on the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) website.

We will continue to share public health information such as the [letter from the Cambridge Public Health Department](#) that has been added to our website and school newsletters.

### **What are current health risks associated with Coronavirus?**

Public health officials continue to state that the risk of being exposed to this virus within Massachusetts continues to be low at this time. As these experts remind us, we are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to Coronavirus at this time.

Please remember that one reason this virus has been so devastating is that it is a new virus, and there is therefore no vaccine to help prevent its spread. Like the flu, COVID-19 can make people very sick, but most people recover fully.

If the disease were to begin spreading within Massachusetts, public health and education agencies are already working together to be prepared. The Cambridge Public Health Department, in partnership with the state health department, are currently tracking and monitoring people who have recently traveled to high-risk areas outside of the U.S.

This illness is not to be taken lightly, and schools are tightening up sanitization practices and following other guidance [from the state](#) and from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) around reducing the spread of airborne illnesses.

How can schools, staff, students and families help prevent any risks associated with COVID-19?

Key points to remember:

1) You can avoid spreading germs through basic hygiene practices.

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (not with your hands), and wash your hands immediately after. Teach young children to cough into their elbow and to wash hands immediately after.

- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- Stay home when you are sick, and do not send children to school if they are sick.

I hope that those reading this message will take a look at the following resource, in order to have informed conversations about the need to avoid spreading germs.

- [Department of Public Health COVID-19](#)

Cambridge Public Schools will continue to take the medical risks of this virus very seriously. This is an evolving situation that must be followed closely from a public health standpoint. We will continue to monitor student health concerns, in close communication with Cambridge Public Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health/School Health Unit, and other city agencies involved in emergency preparedness.

If you have any health-related concerns, please contact [Cambridge Public Health Department](#), your physician, or the DPH Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences at (617) 983-6800.

Also, A number of media stories have been reported in recent weeks in which fears about this illness are fueling anti-immigrant and anti-Asian bias. I want to encourage our community to come together around our shared values, and to help our children understand the impact of stereotyping and bias. If you or someone you know experiences any form of bias, discrimination, or bullying, I encourage you to reach out to your Principal or to any of the individuals listed in [this resource from CPS](#).

As always, I remain grateful that our community is a place where critical thinking, preparation and kindness are equally valued. We are here to help one another, and we will get through this time together.

Sincerely,

Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D.