

February 28, 2020

SUPERINTENDENT'S SALUTATIONS

DEAR SOUTH WHIDBEY COMMUNITY,

We are closely monitoring the latest developments regarding the coronavirus, COVID-19, outbreak. We are writing this letter to update you with what we have learned as of today, and the ways in which our school is addressing this pressing issue.

First, I want to thank the custodial staff and health services staff who are invaluable in helping our schools run smoothly and keeping students' health a daily priority. Our district office staff and our nurses coordinate with our health department partners and other agencies to keep us prepared and ready to respond to any situations that may impact our schools and families. Our South Whidbey custodians have been reminded to clean all common surfaces like door handles, and table tops, etc. with sanitizer. We have ordered and will provide sanitizing wipes for staff to use. We are also using a sanitizing machine.

At all South Whidbey schools, if someone comes to school sick, we are sending them to the nurses' office for review. We are in close communication with our local health department and our nurses are well aware of the situation and how to handle ill children.

In the unlikely event of an outbreak that causes a major level of absence (more than 10%) we will take advice from the DOH on how to proceed and whether school needs to close for a period of time. During the last flu epidemic some years ago, we were well above this threshold and were not made to close, but each situation is different. If you have questions please look at the information provided below.

Finally, please remember that the risks of viruses like COVID-19 are not connected with race, ethnicity or nationality. Perpetuating stigmas is not only inappropriate but does nothing to help the situation; sharing accurate information will. Everyday precautions like diligent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, remaining home if feeling ill, and staying up to date with immunizations

are always important measures in keeping our community healthy. We have not had any major health-related impacts to our schools, but I feel assured knowing our staff, families, and community agencies are all informed and partnering together to keep our kids happy and healthy.

Travel Advisories

As we are approaching Spring Break, it is important to review travel advisories. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) classifies countries into three warning levels.](#) China and South Korea have been placed on a Level 3 Alert. Japan and Italy are currently at Level 2. A Level 2 Alert describes these destinations as, "experiencing sustained community transmission of respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The virus can spread from person to person. Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions should consider postponing nonessential travel."

Travel Recommendations

[The US State Department has four warning levels.](#)

Level 4: China, Level 3: Korea, Level 2 Japan and Italy - All non-essential travel to Level 3 and 4 countries should be avoided. All travel to Level 2 countries should use increased caution. You will be expected to observe a minimum 14-day self-quarantine period and be cleared by a physician before returning to school.

Given the fast-changing nature of the COVID-19 epidemic, if you are planning to travel to Level 1 countries, please continue to monitor the CDC website as classifications may change. If/when classifications change, the schools will respond accordingly.



The health and safety of our students is our utmost priority. Our goal is to maintain a clean and healthy learning environment for our students as well as teach and help them practice healthy habits. In addition to our standard cleaning procedures, we continue to: Sanitize all classrooms and materials with an effective, broad-spectrum disinfectant, paying special attention to high-touch areas.

Urge all community members to stay home if ill. Send children who don't feel well to the Health Room for assessment and send those home who exhibit flu-like symptoms.

Current Safety Measures at Schools

- As our health curriculum focuses on teaching the practices of good hygiene, classroom teachers are reinforcing these lessons and letting children know that we are changing this routine for now to help everyone stay healthy.
- All students, staff and families are advised to follow CDC guidelines in preventing the transmission of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Wash hands before eating and after using the bathroom.
- Cover coughs or sneezes (with sleeve rather than hands).
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from school when sick and see a doctor if experiencing a fever above 100.4°.
- Get vaccinated for the flu.



Looking Ahead

In an abundance of caution, we are preparing for all possibilities and will close school if necessary. Regarding tele school options (remote access for students to continue schooling via the internet by our teachers), Superintendent Reykdal has written to superintendents and advised, "I urge you to use an equity lens when making these plans. School districts must ensure equal access to education for all students. It will likely make more sense to cancel school and/or district services and make up missed days at the end of the school year, rather than deploying a distance learning model that can be accessed by some, but not all, of your students."

As reminder, South Whidbey School District policy and procedure on infectious diseases are located on [Board Docs Policy 3414](#).

Resources

For the latest information on COVID-19 please refer to these helpful resources:

[South Whidbey School District Health Page](#)

[Centers for Disease Control Resource Page](#)

[Centers for Disease Control: What to do if you are sick](#)

[U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory](#)

[Washington Department of Health Resource Page](#)

As we always do, we are following the lead of children and if children raise questions or concerns, teachers are addressing them in age-appropriate ways. If you feel your child is experiencing strong emotions regarding this current situation, please reach out to your child's teacher for support.

We place the health and safety of our South Whidbey community above all else. We appreciate your partnership in this matter, and your help with our collective efforts to ensure the health of our families, faculty and staff.