

February 28, 2020

Dear Parents/Families in Region One,

This letter is to let you know that steps are being taken in our schools to try to prevent or intervene as much as we possibly can to address the Coronavirus.

All agencies continue to follow the guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) on specific strategies for schools.

While the Coronavirus news is concerning, it is important to know that there are other respiratory viruses, such as the flu (influenza) currently circulating in schools. Fever, coughing, and difficulty breathing are symptoms associated with all of them. Therefore, anyone exhibiting these symptoms should not be assumed to have Coronavirus.

On Thursday, Sam Herrick, our Business Manager, and I and custodians from our schools met with two representatives from the Torrington Department of Health. We heard more information about the Coronavirus, what we might expect, and considered more precautionary measures we can take in our schools. We are in "containment" mode which is to slow the spread. However, the Department of Health stated that we are shifting from containment to "pandemic planning".

We had good discussions about what we can do now and do consistently, so that all of our students and staff have better chances of staying healthy. While we do not yet have the Coronavirus in Connecticut, we are having high numbers of absences due to the flu. Precautionary measures that we can take for the Coronavirus are those that we can also take to try to reduce the number of persons who contract the flu.

We have agreed that we will follow these plans in all of our schools:

- 1) We are asking that each adult use anti-bacterial products (safe for classroom use) on all high-touch surfaces daily, such as desks and doorknobs. This is very important. Custodians will do what they can, but we are asking for all teachers/staff to help with this throughout the school day.
- 2) Computer teachers will be given a disinfectant spray for computer keyboards.
- 3) School nurses are asked to communicate with students to remind them to cover their cough and to not touch their faces or eyes, as contact from hands to face are the most prevalent ways to spread illnesses.
- 4) All persons should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.
- 5) We are looking into having all schools using more effective cleaning methods for restrooms, and locker rooms.
- 6) Our custodians are committed to doing a thorough job of cleaning areas as always, and paying particular attention to places that have high usage, such as locker rooms, bleachers, lunchroom tables, etc.
- 7) Staff in our schools will be tracking absences to determine if the number of students and staff missing school is due to influenza, to know if are numbers are trending up or down.

It's important to remember these strategies to reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, at school and at home:

- Practice social distances when ill
- Keep children home who exhibit cold and flu-like symptoms
- Refrain from coming to work with cold and flu-like symptoms
- Keep unwashed hands out of mouths, eyes, etc.
- Wash hands frequently
- Know and use thorough hand-washing techniques
- Discourage the sharing of food

Currently, public health officials are not recommending the use of masks or gloves in public settings.

Also, at this time, federal health authorities are not recommending that schools cancel classes. I will be meeting with our administrative team next week to plan for ways we can continue to provide education to students, should an outbreak or warning from the Connecticut Department of Health request that schools close.

We have also had questions about overseas trips for students. We are not making any decisions at this time. If conditions warrant a cancellation, notification to families will go out as soon as that decision is made.

We appreciate your assistance in helping to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and want you to know that we are continually monitoring information on both flu and Coronavirus.

Thank you.
Dr. Pam Vogel