April 3, 2020

Dear DOE Community,

The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is rapidly changing New York City and our school community. The best thing we can do to help control the spread of COVID-19 is to stay home as much as possible, which is why schools have been closed and students are now learning remotely.

We know this is a difficult time, especially with recent news stories about COVID-19 exposures in school communities. Because COVID-19 is now widespread in NYC, there will be people who are infected that may have been associated with your school community. School buildings are not a place of greater exposure than any other part of our city. At this time, the NYC Health Department does not know the details or locations of exposure for every case. Everyone should assume they have been exposed, because exposure can happen anywhere—this is why we are asking people to please stay home as much as possible. By staying home and practicing social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from others and not meeting in groups), you can do your part and help slow the spread of COVID-19.

New information from the CDC explains that people who do not show symptoms may still be able to spread COVID-19. A face covering can help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people, so you should wear one whenever you leave home. A face covering will not protect you from infection, but it can help others.

A face covering can include anything that covers your nose and mouth, including dust masks, scarves and bandanas. Do not use health care worker masks, as those must be preserved for people in the health care system.

Even if you have a face covering, continue to stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with other people.

While staying home, everyone should monitor their health closely for symptoms such as:
- Fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius or greater)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)
- Sore throat

Most people who get sick with COVID-19 experience mild illness and can recover at home. If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stay home until all of the following are true:
- It has been seven days since your symptoms started.
- You have not had a fever for three days without the use of fever-reducing drugs.
- Your cough or sore throat symptoms have improved.

If you do not feel better in three to four days from when your symptoms began, talk to your doctor by calling, texting, or using a telemedicine visit. If you have trouble breathing, please call **911**.

For more information on symptoms, monitoring your health, and what to do if you get sick, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus and look for "Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Factsheet."

The COVID-19 outbreak can make you feel less safe. As you do your part to stay home and stop the spread, you may be experiencing losses related to work, finances, social interaction, personal health, and family obligations, or you may be coping with the illness or death of a loved one, among other challenges. All of these can be significant and traumatic, and recovering can take time.

The realities of social and physical distancing and isolation mean you may not be able to cope with grief as you have in the past, like being able to visit family and friends or attend places of worship or funeral services in person. These changes can impact your grieving process and make recovery even more difficult. If the symptoms of stress become overwhelming, you can connect with counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text "WELL" to 65173 or chat online by visiting nyc.gov/nycwell.

It's important we come together as a city and support one another as neighbors and New Yorkers during this time. COVID-19 is not more likely found in any one race or nationality, and we must each model inclusion and actively work to combat bias in our workplaces and communities.

Nothing matters more than the health and safety of our staff and students, and we are committed to keeping our school community fully informed. For specific guidance for you, your family and your children:
- Visit nyc.gov/coronavirus and look for "Information for Parents and Caregivers of Pre-School and School-Age Children."
- Visit schools.nyc.gov/coronavirus for important school-related information.
- Visit nyc.gov/coronavirus for up-to-date, critical information, including ways to guard against stigma and to practice inclusivity in the workplace and community.
- For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.
- Call **311** with questions about COVID-19 or services and programs.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Carranza
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