



# IRVINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Office of the Superintendent

*Dr. Neely Hackett*  
Superintendent

One University Place    Irvington, New Jersey 07111  
(973) 399-6800 x 2110    (973) 372-3724 fax

March 12, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information regarding the district's response to the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19. I would like to acknowledge the Irvington Health Department for providing the factual information contained in this letter.

### **WHAT IS KNOWN**

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Similar to influenza, the people who are most likely to have severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>60 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19, but the National Institutes of Health is evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine already.
- Currently, there is NO confirmed community spread of COVID-19, meaning the virus is not being spread from person-to-person. However, experts predict there will eventually be community spread.

### **HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS**

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms; there have been reports of this with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW**

- Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.
- Teach children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Remind individuals to wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat.
- Tell children to avoid touching their mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body.
- Enhance cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) will recommend closing schools is very low, but not zero. If there is a need to close the schools, students will be provided with academic work for 15 days for approximately 4 hours per day. This will constitute home instruction and allow the district to count the missed day (s) toward the 180-day school year requirement. Students must complete all assignments and return them once schools are cleared for opening.

The Irvington Department of Health and Senior Services is actively monitoring this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as the situation continues to unfold. The department is



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tasked with investigating infectious diseases within the community and will take all necessary actions it deems appropriate to protect public health.

Please be advised of the following measures that have been or will be taken by the Irvington Public Schools:

1. Increased cleaning protocols will be put in place for high touch surfaces. Bio-Shine, the district's vendor for cleaning supplies, recommends the use of *BruTab 6S* to clean surfaces. The district currently uses this chemical to clean the schools. The deep cleaning of high volume areas will occur every weekend until further notice.
2. Hand sanitizer will be ordered for every classroom in the district.
3. District nurses will provide training to students in regards to covering their cough and sneezes with tissue or their elbow and regularly washing their hands (20 seconds).
4. The District will remain in constant contact with the Irvington Health Department to obtain current and accurate information. The Director of the Health Department will contact the district as needed to advise of any Irvington students or staff who have been placed under quarantine. An individual returning to the district after being quarantined will present a monitoring agreement letter that includes the date the quarantine concluded. The district is not permitted to screen staff or students to determine a COVID-19 diagnosis.
5. Staff members or students who have a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing will be sent home and requested to seek medical attention.
6. Emergency communication systems (School Messenger and telephone system) will be tested for emergency readiness.
7. The District is working with our food vendor to ensure that we provide meals to students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch if schools are closed due to COVID-19.
8. Out of state field trips have been cancelled until further notice.

Please keep your children home when they are sick. If a student exhibits illness or COVID-19 related symptoms, the school nurse will contact a parent or guardian to come pick them up immediately. We recognize how challenging this situation is for our families, students, and staff, and we take this situation seriously. We are taking real-time preventative measures in response to new information that key agencies provide. Our goal is to prioritize the health and safety of our students and staff. Thank you for working with us through this evolving situation that impacts all facets of life in our entire community. We will continue to provide you with regular updates.

More information about COVID-19 can be found at: [24-Hour Public Hotline 1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222)

- The Irvington Department of Health and Senior Services at (973) 416-7760 or [www.irvington.net](http://www.irvington.net)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) website at [www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health)

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Neely Hackett