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SUPERINTENDENT

# NANTUCKET PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Nantucket Public Schools Community and Families:

As the implications of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to evolve rapidly, we would like to share with you the most current information that is available to us as well as update you on local responses and communication.

First of all, the most important information for you to know is the following: **As of this morning, we have no confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nantucket Public Schools or in the Nantucket community. Local health officials will continue to take actions as warranted by the evidence and in consultation with the Massachusetts and Nantucket Departments of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control.** We all know how fluid this situation is, and we continue to stay in close communication with Roberto Santamaria, Nantucket's Director of Health and Human Services, as well as DPH and CDC for any new information or guidance.

Next, we want to be sure everyone has the necessary information of what the schools are doing in relation to preventive measures:

- **Cleaning/Disinfecting:** NPS custodial staff have enhanced their cleaning and disinfecting protocols throughout the district. This includes increased focus on the common area cleaning routines (handrails, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs and other hard surfaces). Classrooms in every school are being cleaned and disinfected using the Protexus Electrostatic Sprayer, one of our best protective protocols against COVID-19. Please click on the following link for more information: <https://zogics.com/cleaning/protexus-handheld-electrostatic-sprayer>. Wipes, hand sanitizers, tissues, soap and other cleaning products are readily available in all of our buildings for students and staff.
- **Hand Washing/Sanitation:** We continue to reinforce with students and staff best practices for minimizing the spread of germs. Our school nurses, administrators and classroom teachers have done an excellent job communicating to students the importance of proper hand washing and use of hand sanitizer. We are discouraging the use of masks at the recommendations of the CDC and DPH, as they are not effective and may cause children to bring their hands to their faces to adjust the mask.
- **Coordination with Town and State Officials:** We will continue to make our decisions based on guidance from local, state and federal public health agencies, in particular the Massachusetts and Nantucket Departments of Public Health (MDPH).
- **Quarantine Protocol:** Nantucket students and families will be required to follow the quarantine protocol from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). We have been asked numerous times about the protocols for members of a household who are living with those in

*The mission of the Nantucket Public Schools is to engage students in a process of learning and discovery that cultivates their unique strengths and talents, meets their diverse educational needs, and promotes social responsibility.*

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self-quarantine. Specifically, if one person in the household is in self-quarantine, are the rest of the members of the household also required to be in self-quarantine? According to the most recent guidance from MDPH, the answer is no. That could obviously change if household members become symptomatic, and at that point, we would consult MDPH for further guidance.

**As a reminder, students and staff who are sick are encouraged to stay home, and the district will continue to respond to these situations with flexibility.**

- **Voluntary Notification:** Families are urged to voluntarily communicate with the school department about possible exposure of any member of your immediate household, or concern about possible symptoms of the virus (fever, cough, or shortness of breath). If you have information to share, we ask that you contact your school nurse or the school administration immediately. At this time, we can confirm that there is one NPS staff member who traveled to Italy during February vacation. This person has shown no symptoms whatsoever yet agreed to self-quarantine immediately upon return for the prescribed 14 days.
- **Confidentiality/Privacy:** As with any medical information, confidentiality about our staff, students, and families must be maintained at all times according to federal regulations. Information about reasons for absences, travel history and illness cannot be given out and must be protected. As we continue to manage the COVID-19 situation, it is also essential that we adhere to our commitment to community and caring relationships. How we talk about COVID-19, so that no students and/or families are spotlighted or profiled is our top priority. Support, empathy, and kindness are of paramount importance during these uncertain times.
- **Communication with MA DESE:** We are also receiving guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) with regard to protocols around school closures, absences and other issues that may be necessary in the future. On Friday, Nantucket Public Schools administrators participated in the MA DESE joint conference call with DPH. During this call, we learned the thoughts and protocols DESE will be using in case of the need for school closures. At this point, we are considering any and all options recommended to us to educate our children should school closures be a necessity.
- **Travel/School Trips:** Based on the declaration of the “State of Emergency” in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by Governor Baker due to concerns around the Coronavirus (COVID19), we are canceling all approved school trips, both out-of-state and international. This includes field trips, staff conferences, and international trips over April vacation. We will revisit previously approved staff travel and school trips that are to occur after May 1, 2020 and make informed decisions for the remainder of the school year.
- **School Events:** We are presently monitoring all school events with large crowd gatherings. We will make decisions in conjunction with local public health officials on future cancellations on a case by case basis depending on event participation.
- **Resources for Staff and Families:** We encourage all staff, families and community members to stay informed about the COVID-19 outbreak by visiting any of the following websites:
  - Town of Nantucket: <https://nantucket-ma.gov/1657/Coronavirus-Disease-2019>
  - MDPH: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-guidance-and-recommendations>
  - CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
  - Multilingual resources: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/coronavirus>

- **Resources for Children:** We realize that all of this news about COVID-19 can make children very anxious. Here is a link to some resources for supporting and speaking with children of all ages about COVID-19 from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP):
  - [www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource).

Once again, we remain deeply committed to student and staff wellness and will continue to keep you informed of updates or changes as advised by our local and state departments of public health.

Thank you for your understanding in this challenging time.



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