



March 12, 2020

Dear Portland Public Schools families and community members,

As of this writing, Maine has recently reported one presumed positive case of Coronavirus 19. That case is in Androscoggin County and the Maine Center for Disease Control (Maine CDC) says we are not currently seeing widespread community transmission in Maine. However, the Portland Public Schools is being vigilant in stepping up our precautions to help prevent any spread of the virus in our community.

Gov. Janet Mills is not recommending schools be closed, so our focus now is to keep our schools open while protecting the school environment so that our students and staff stay healthy and safe. The virus, also known as COVID-19, spreads through close person-to-person contact, so we are taking the following measures as precautions: enhanced cleaning of frequently touched surfaces at our schools; instituting protocols for any students or staff who are ill; limiting public access to student gatherings; and postponing or canceling interdistrict activities and field trips. However, the situation is rapidly evolving, so please know that we'll continue to add to these precautions as we get more updates from public health officials.

Limiting public access to gatherings and activities

In an effort to limit our students' and staff's potential exposure to the virus, we are adjusting our approach to gatherings, activities and events. We will be canceling all gatherings that involve bringing people into the schools (e.g. parent events, PTO meetings, student events that include families etc.). All interdistrict activities, including athletic and co-curricular events, are postponed or canceled. In addition, we are canceling all field trips for the time being. Out of an abundance of caution, we are also pausing on having our valued volunteers come into our buildings. At this point, school lunch, assemblies, sports practices and other events that bring students together will proceed but will not be open to families or the public. This may change in the near future.

Parent - Teacher Conferences

We will proceed with our scheduled parent-teacher conferences at this time. We ask parents/guardians who are sick or exhibiting symptoms to conduct their conference over the phone or to reschedule.

Share your travel history

PPS families and staff should alert the school nurse if they've traveled to countries that have Centers for Disease Control (CDC) alert or warning level health notices, or have been in close contact with someone who has, or have plans to travel outside of the country prior to the end of the school year. You can find more information about CDC travel alerts at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Students who are ill or immunocompromised

Any child exhibiting signs of COVID-19 – fever, dry cough, sore throat and shortness of breath – while at school will be kept in a safe area of the school away from other students or staff until a parent or guardian can take them home. And just as a reminder, any student with a fever should stay home until they are fever-free without fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), for 24 hours. Parents of students whose immune systems are compromised have discretion on whether to send their



child to school. They should alert their school nurse and work together to come up with a plan to best protect those students.

School closings a possibility

Our school nurses and administrators are continuing to work with public health officials to keep updated on the situation. In the meantime, we are planning for the possibility of having to close schools to protect students and staff. If that occurs, we are developing plans to provide students with learning materials to use at home. Part of our planning includes the development of tech-enabled solutions. We are aware that not all families have access to technology devices or to the internet and so we are working to develop options for these students/families to ensure all students can access any learning options we provide. There will be no pre-kindergarten classes during any shutdown.

School Lunch Program

We have a plan to continue our meal program during any school interruption. We are authorized to run our school lunch programs in the same way that we do during the summer. In the event of a school closure, we will communicate the location of sites where meals will be offered.

Our overarching goal is continuing student learning while ensuring the safety of students and staff. I will continue to update you on local developments regarding the virus. I encourage everyone to continue with common-sense precautions: stay home when sick, cover up coughs and sneezes and wash hands regularly. Let's all work together to keep everyone safe!

More information on the virus can be found at the COVID-19 PPS Information Center on our website at:

<https://sites.google.com/a/portlandschools.org/pps-health-services/home/coronavirus-information?scrllybrkr=649b7009>

Xavier Botana, Superintendent