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LOUIS N. WOOL, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**Combating Coronavirus with Planning, Common Sense and
Caring for Your Family and Community**

March 4, 2020

Dear Parents & Guardians,

The purpose of this letter is to update you on our District's preparedness in dealing with the Coronavirus. The Coronavirus is causing understandable concern and confusion, but I want to reassure you that the District is taking all steps necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff, and to make sure that teaching and learning continue during this challenging time. First, it is important to note that there has been no change in the guidance provided to schools by the National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) since the District's initial notification to parents on February 5, which outlined the common sense steps that everyone should take to keep themselves safe and provided a [link to information](#) from the NYSDOH.

The information provided in the FAQ below will explain how to protect your family, the risks posed by the Coronavirus (quite low for children), the steps the District will take to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in the event of a school closure, and most importantly, how to speak with your children in age-appropriate language during these stressful and confusing times.

While the Coronavirus presents important health challenges, it also provides us an opportunity to teach our children how to support their community during a crisis. The children are always watching and looking to adults to determine how to manage during trying times like this. I have every confidence that our school community will shine in this challenging moment, and I know that our parents will once again exhibit the qualities that make our learning community so extraordinary. Every member of our school community is committed to an ethic of care and respect for one another. Now is the time we demonstrate that commitment by our choices and actions.

Finally, the health and welfare of your children and of your neighbors are inextricably linked. I urge you to act using common sense and to care for yourself and others to help keep everyone healthy and safe. In caring for your family, you are caring for your community. As always, the Board of Education and I are proud to lead a learning community that consistently demonstrates an ethic of care for one another - I have no doubt that we will demonstrate that ethic again.

Sincerely,

Louis N. Wool, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

HARRISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Frequently Asked Questions about the Coronavirus & Possible School Closing
March 4, 2020

What steps can I take to protect my family from the Coronavirus?

According to guidance from the CDC and the NYSDOH, the most important steps you can take to protect your family and yourself from the Coronavirus are to:

- Wash your hands often “with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.” It might seem basic but it is the easiest action any person can take to minimize the threat, and it’s also how we care for each other. This [video](#) provides age-appropriate guidance on how to help young children learn to wash their hands thoroughly. The Seasonal Flu Guide for Parents in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) also provides helpful information about steps you can take to avoid the spread of germs.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- When you or other members of your family are sick, keep them away from others to prevent the uninfected from getting sick, too.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to help prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- *Get the flu vaccine: The CDC recommends making sure everyone receives this season’s flu vaccine; it won’t prevent Coronavirus, but it will reduce the risk of contracting regular influenza, which means fewer people will need medical care at the same time as any Coronavirus patients.*

What should I do if I or a member of my family feels sick?

A key to preventing the spread of any contagious illness is to avoid exposing others to the illness. If you or a family member feels sick, [stay home and consult with your doctor](#). If you suspect you or your child may have been exposed to the Coronavirus, or any other contagious virus or condition, seek medical help and please [do not come to school](#). Here are the CDC recommended steps to follow [if you or a family member feels sick](#).

How will the District decide if it’s necessary to close school in response to the Coronavirus?

District officials have been in regular consultation with our school district physician and rely on information from the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Education Department to take the precautions that health experts advise are necessary. Any decision to close school will be informed by guidance received from county and state health officials. You will be notified of all steps that the District will undertake in the event a school closing becomes necessary.

What steps is the District taking to clean classrooms and prevent the spread of germs?

Custodial staff have been directed to prioritize and increase the frequency of cleaning common and high traffic areas each day. Under normal circumstances, these areas are cleaned once a day. Prioritized cleaning includes bathrooms, the lunchroom, common spaces, door handles, emergency bar on doors, and water fountains. This means that ongoing maintenance or litter pick-up outside will be deprioritized temporarily. All efforts will be made to keep students healthy and safe. The District has also taken an inventory of needed cleaning products and taken steps to ensure that we have ample inventory of cleaning products on hand.

If it does become necessary to close school, how will students receive instruction?

If it becomes necessary to close a school or multiple schools, the District will provide ongoing instructional support for students, and we are mobilizing our teachers to be prepared in the event of the school closing. The District will utilize two platforms to provide direct support from teachers to their students. In grades 3 through 12, teachers will utilize Google Classroom to deliver ongoing instruction; in grades kindergarten through grade 2, the software SeeSaw will be the primary delivery platform. Comprehensive instructions on how to access this material will be made available in the event of a school closing.

Online district resources will also be made available to provide additional instructional service. We are working with our invaluable partner, the Harrison Association of Teachers, and our extraordinarily innovative faculty to utilize all of our available resources to support your children.

If you're aware of a family that does not have access to the Internet or is lacking a device, please encourage them to contact the principal and the District will assist the family in accessing District resources. Any request for support is confidential.

How should I talk with my child about the Coronavirus?

The best way to help children deal with fear of the unknown is to provide accurate information. It is important to remind children that Coronavirus does not pose a great risk to children, and that there are simple ways to protect yourself from exposure.

Most importantly, when talking to your children it is essential to consider their developmental readiness when sharing this information. Preadolescents and adolescents are more capable of dealing with the information in a straightforward and fact-based manner. This information from the [CDC](#) underscores the limited risk to children and could be useful in talking to adolescents and preadolescents. This information from the [Child Mind Institute](#) provides helpful suggestions for discussing Coronavirus with children. For younger children, this [video](#) from National Public Radio provides a "comic book" version to assist parents in discussing this issue with younger children.

How will the District communicate with parents and provide resources in response to the Coronavirus?

Within the next week, the District will be launching a webpage to provide the most up-to-date information from the NYSDOH and CDC regarding the Coronavirus as it relates to public schools, as well as any information should it become necessary to close school. This webpage will also serve as a single point of access for educational resources should it become necessary to provide instruction to students remotely.