

Friday, February 28, 2020

Dear Parents, Faculty and Staff,

I write with an update regarding North Shore's response to the COVID-19 or Coronavirus and **ask that you take the time to read this communication in full**. Below you will find information about our current School responses to the risk of Coronavirus, as well as our current thinking around Spring Break travel and contingency planning in the event that we feel that closing school is necessary.

**What we know now:**

Earlier this week the Center for Disease Control raised further alarm about the expected spread of the Coronavirus in the United States. We have been carefully monitoring this situation through multiple national and international sources. The Illinois Department of Health (IDPH) has stated on Wednesday, February 26, 2020, that the risk of individuals in Illinois contracting the virus is low, indicating that there are only two cases reported in the State as of this week, and does not recommend either the use of face masks or canceling classes. We will continue to monitor as the IDPH and other organizations evolve their positions and use their public health guidance to inform our actions.

As a school administration, we continue to review and assess the available information from leading State, national and international sources such as the IDPH, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), International SOS (ISOS), and the World Health Organization (WHO) on a daily basis. We are also in close contact with our local and national school networks as we share information and proposed action steps.

In all circumstances, the health and safety of our community are paramount and there are actions that all members of the community - administration, faculty, staff, parents, and students - are taking and can take to support the health and wellness of our community.

**What the School is currently doing:**

We have cancelled two trips that might have increased student risk of exposure.

We continue to employ many of the enhanced sanitation and hygiene protocols that we promote and execute during flu season:

- The day staff cleans surfaces that are transmission points (doorknobs, light switches, desks, tables, hand railings, water fountains, etc.) regularly throughout the day.
- Our evening cleaning crews use enhanced cleaning/disinfecting measures throughout the school.
- Our school nurse monitors student and staff illnesses and works with individual families as needed.

**What you and your child can do:**

The following health-related strategies all of us can take will minimize the spread of illness:

- Wash hands frequently and vigorously (we encourage you to work with your children to emphasize the type of [hand-washing practices recommended by](#)

[the CDC](#)), especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Disinfect objects that are in regular use and surfaces that you may have touched with unwashed hands
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then properly dispose of the tissue
- Reduce unnecessary exposure to sick persons
- Do not share food or drinks with others
- Do not come to school sick. Those who have been diagnosed with the flu or have flu-like symptoms (fever and one or more of the following respiratory symptoms: cough, nasal congestion, or sore throat), should not come to campus until 24 hours after their temperature has returned to normal without the use of fever-reducing medications and they have been free of vomiting or diarrhea episodes for 24 hours. Exercise an over-abundance of caution.

[This WHO link](#) provides a number of short videos providing advice relevant to preventative measures that may be of help to you.

What this might mean for students:

This can be scary and confusing for students. We want to acknowledge the likelihood of an emotional impact on both kids and adults stemming from the Coronavirus as well as the news coverage and conversations taking place about it. We encourage parents to engage in conversations about this with their child and help them process any fears that are present. We see the following resources as good starting points for approaching these conversations.

- Healthline: [How to Talk to Your Kids About the Coronavirus](#)
- Psychology Today: [How to Talk to Your Anxious Child About the Coronavirus](#)

Additionally, the Chinese origins of the virus may also lead to questions or concerns about how people who are -- or "appear to be" -- Chinese are connected to the virus. This could be a point of confusion and questioning for younger children in particular, and—to the extent that students are confused and express it—it could have a serious emotional impact on our Asian and Asian American students and families. Here again, we encourage family conversations that are supportive of this educational work. [This Time Magazine article](#) provides information about how past and present public health issues have often provoked racial stereotyping and led to widespread misinformation. We seek your support in helping our community members - students and adults - avoid these traps.

As always, our counseling staff stands ready to support those in need.

#### **What Comes Next:**

We anticipate that the swiftly changing nature of this situation will require additional communications, particularly as the situation evolves and we approach Spring Break.

We may ask for travel information from families, particularly as we go into and return from Spring Break. We are preparing protocols to address our return to campus and the various contingencies involved.

Out of caution, we are also planning for the possibility of an extended school closure and remote learning scenarios. We already have the capability to deliver lessons remotely through My North Shore, Seesaw, PowerSchool Learning (Haiku) and our Google suite. We are examining how we might need to modify these plans for the current situation and will communicate through My North Shore and our emergency notification system, as needed.

Thanks for your attention to this and all future communications on this issue. Please be assured that the health and wellness of our community is our top priority and we are prepared to adjust our operations should the public health situation change. If you have any questions, I encourage you to reach out to Assistant Head of School Chris Boyle - [cboyle@nscds.org](mailto:cboyle@nscds.org) - or me.

Sincerely,

Tom Flemma

North Shore Country Day School | 310 Green Bay Road | Winnetka, IL 60093 | 847.446.0674

This e-mail was sent to [tflemma@nscds.org](mailto:tflemma@nscds.org) by [northshore@myschoolemails.com](mailto:northshore@myschoolemails.com). You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive e-mails sent to this recipient list.

--

Tom Flemma P'22 '26  
Head of School  
North Shore Country Day School  
310 Green Bay Road  
Winnetka, IL 60093

Phone: 847-441-3307  
Email: [tflemma@nscds.org](mailto:tflemma@nscds.org)  
[www.nscds.org](http://www.nscds.org)

Click [here](#) to learn "What Matters Most" at North Shore Country Day.

