



Davis Waldorf School

Inspired Learning for the Whole Child

Davis Waldorf School COVID-19 Response

Planning - Prevention – Preparation

Dear Davis Waldorf School Community and Friends,

We are writing to update you regarding the planning that we have put in place in the event the Coronavirus COVID-19 affects our school community. We place the health and safety of our students as a top priority and want to keep you informed as much as possible as the situation changes.

Classroom Cleaning: In order to minimize the spread of this disease, we have **increased our cleaning** schedule and are following all health department recommendations for cleaning protocols. The classrooms, including the door handles and other commonly touched surfaces, are being cleaned with hospital grade disinfectant in the evening after school has closed. The classrooms are ventilated after the cleaning is completed. We will move back to our regular cleaning supplies once the disease has passed.

Student Absences: Effective immediately, we are **tracking student absences in greater detail** so that we have accurate data regarding the degree of illness in our community. When reporting that your child will be out of school, please **directly email office@daviswaldorf.org** and copy your Early Childhood or Class Teacher **indicating whether this is due to symptoms of illness**, personal precaution, or non-medical reasons. Sharing this information is important so that we can comply with protocols for school closure due to extraordinary absence rates. Today, our attendance rate has not varied significantly from normal levels.

Planning: **We are putting plans in place for the possibility we may be required to quarantine a class or temporarily close the school.** There are several factors that we will use to determine whether a school closure is necessary. This plan may change over time per the recommendations from the CDC, Yolo County Health Department, Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) and other agencies.

Closure Notification: **If the decision is made to close DWS, the notification communication will be via our emergency alert system** and email from the school office. There is the possibility of little advance notice, but our intention is not to do this during the school day. We are creating a page dedicated to this situation on our website; please refer to this page for updates ([Link READ COVID-19 UPDATES](#)).

DWS will follow regional and state requirements, and we will close should DJUSD close the entire district. We realize that this would be very disruptive for all concerned and present many challenges. Therefore, we ask you to make preparations ahead of time for this contingency.

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Community Events - Annual Auction: We are reviewing our largest community fundraising event, the Annual Auction, and at this point **the Auction is still happening** and preparations are being made for the Saturday, March 28 event. If this changes we will notify you. If you have any questions or concerns, please, as always, reach out to us. We will continue to be in close touch as we move through the coming days and weeks. The good news is that we are a strong and healthy community.

Yours sincerely,
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Additional Information:

Information about COVID Virus: This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The California Department of Public Health (CDPH), in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/School%20Guidance_ADA%20Compliant_FINAL.pdf

Prevention Healthy Reminders: Public health officials recommend the following steps that people should take to reduce their risk of getting and spreading any viral respiratory infections. These include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throwing the tissue in the trash and washing your hands.
- Cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces.
- Staying at home and away from others if you are feeling ill. Students, faculty, and staff must be free of symptoms—including fever, vomiting, or diarrhea—for 24 hours before returning to school. Given the transmission of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets, we consider excessive coughing a symptom as well.

Some Suggestions on Communicating to Children:

From Waldorf Today, Talking to Children about COVID-19 By phillywaldorf

COVID-19 is in the news and on everyone's mind. Our children, unfortunately, are not likely an exception. Even when children are shielded from media, peers, siblings, and overheard conversations can give children just enough information to bring forth concern. Children are also

incredibly intuitive to their family's emotions and will pick up on any fear and anxiety their parents or extended family may be feeling.

So what is the best approach to sharing when it comes to children and coronavirus?

Shielding vs. Communicating: With small children, shielding them from troubling information is ideal. Children in early childhood should be kept from the news if possible. This includes making an effort to talk about coronavirus only when they are not present and not exposing them to televised news. Children in young grades, such as first through third, would also ideally be shielded, but exposure to older children on playgrounds or siblings at home means this is less likely to be possible.

When it becomes apparent that the child has knowledge about the virus, then age-appropriate communication can begin, with the foremost focus being to help the child feel safe and more secure. It's important to communicate once you know a child has some, even very limited, knowledge of the virus to be sure that they do not awfulize the small amount of information they have in the absence of a parent giving age-appropriate guidance.

Listening and Tailoring Responses: If you suspect your child knows about the virus, begin with an open-ended question about what they know and then actively and intently listen. Once their level of knowledge is known, follow up with a question about concerns and listen intently again. By keeping the conversation fluid and open, it will help to prevent over sharing on the parent's part and bringing more concerns to children than they may already have.

It's also important to note that adults have different needs for coping than children. While an adult may relieve anxiety by learning all they can or preparing their home for extended quarantine, children will not necessarily take comfort in these measures. Consider that children under twelve will have a primarily emotional response to the news and as such require lots of listening from parents and lots of reassurance.

While this reassurance can involve sharing encouraging data, it's essential to remember the real question behind the questions, whatever form may take is, "Am I safe? Is our family going to be okay? How can I feel more in control?" As such, answers need to ultimately address these concerns that lie behind questions, even if questions are detailed oriented such as talking transmission rates or talking points picked up from news or an older peer.

A key part of listening will be making sure, as a parent, that you are never dismissive of the child's fears, even if they seem irrational.

In The New York Times Parenting article *How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus*, Abi Gewirtz, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, and professor at the University of Minnesota discusses this issue:

"If your child is afraid because some kid on the bus told him he might die, that's a real fear and you should take it seriously. If you simply tell the child, you'll be fine," they might not feel heard. Listen to them and track what the child is feeling," she said. "You can say something in a calm voice like, 'That sounds pretty scary, I can see it in your face.'"

Empowerment and Control: Fear of the unknown and anxiety of what's to come can often be mitigated by empowerment.

In the [Time Magazine](#) article, *How to Talk to Your Kids about Coronavirus*, Ellen Braaten, co-director of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Massachusetts General Hospital says there is benefit in reminding children of things that are in their power, like washing their hands and covering their sneezes and coughs to avoid getting and spreading illness. She says, "Knowing there's something we can do makes us feel less powerless."

[In this study](#) about empowering families and children during a healthcare crisis, experts recommend four areas of focus — choice, agenda-setting, reframing negatives and providing emotional support.

In this current scenario, choice and agenda-setting can look like something as simple as choosing snacks or some favorite activities to do in case of school closure. In terms of reframing a negative, a school closure might be suggestive as having positive aspects, such as, "It's going to be nice to spend more time at home together as a family."

Older Students and Teens: Being informed and being anxious do not have to go hand in hand. Details for this age group, and learning about encouraging details specifically, may be very helpful. There is much misinformation, conspiracy, and fear-based reporting online that an older child may be exposed too, even in texts of conversations with peers. Arming teens with knowledge about realistic and trusted news sources and information may be extremely valuable to share.

Also involving older children in empowering activities can be helpful, with the understanding that a little goes a long way. It might include giving the child hand sanitizer for their backpack, taking them shopping for medicine or food to have on hand during a longer stay at home, or talking about ways to pass time if school is canceled for more than a week.

Here are some more helpful resources:

- [American Psychological Association: How to talk to children about difficult news](#)
- [Common Sense Media: Explaining the News to Our Kids](#)
- [Time Magazine: How to Talk to Kids About the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)
- [The New York Times: How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

This article is from the Waldorf School of Philadelphia blog *Loving Learning*.