

OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

March 3, 2020

Dear Austin Prep Parents,

The health, welfare and safety of the Austin Prep community will always be my highest priority. Last week, when I attended the National Association of Independent Schools Annual Conference in Philadelphia, I participated in discussions with independent school leaders related to school preparedness and response for the coronavirus (also known as COVID-19). Earlier this week, I participated in a Town of Reading Office of Emergency Management (OEM) meeting to advance discussions related to local planning.

As of yesterday, the [Massachusetts Department of Health](#) announced the first “presumptive positive case” of COVID-19 here in the Commonwealth, but the health risk to Massachusetts residents [remains low](#). Additionally, based on [risk assessment information](#) from the United States [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC), “most people in the United States will have little immediate risk of exposure to this virus.”

While it’s hard to predict the impact of the virus in the coming weeks, Austin Prep is implementing additional practices to keep our community healthy and safe. Based on the information from the CDC, one of the best ways to protect against the spread of disease is good hygiene in the form of frequent handwashing. I met with the faculty and staff earlier this week to update them on the OEM meeting and to stress the importance of handwashing so they can reinforce this habit with our students.

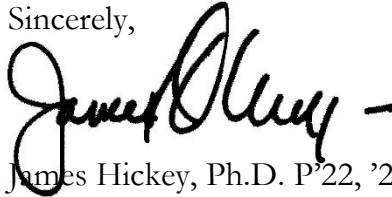
Our facilities staff and our food service staff have augmented their focus on proper and increased sanitizing procedures. Our bathroom facilities are supplied with disinfecting soap, classrooms are equipped with disinfecting wipes for desks, and additional sanitizing dispensers have been placed around campus.

Spring break is right around the corner and I encourage you to be thoughtful about any plans you may have as it relates to [travel to areas where the CDC has](#)

[issued advisories and caution](#). Many colleges and universities have already cancelled their study abroad programs [at the request of the CDC](#) and recalled their students, some of whom were placed in quarantine upon return. It remains a possibility that citizens who travel abroad may be restricted from returning to the United States. Austin Prep has no international student trips planned for spring break.

Finally, at the risk of seeming obvious, please keep your children home if they are not feeling well. The coronavirus situation is changing rapidly and, as always, I will keep you apprised of any developments that may impact Austin Prep. Please be in touch with me directly (jhickey@austinprep.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Hickey -". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

James Hickey, Ph.D. P'22, '23, '24
Headmaster