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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Maryville City Schools is committed to maintaining a healthy campus environment for our students and a healthy workplace for our employees. As you know, we issued a statement in late February about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) which gave both staff and families a sense of how our schools are addressing this new challenge to public health. In recent days, the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control declared that COVID-19 had reached the level of a global pandemic. In addition, the federal government is taking steps to legislate a response and Governor Lee declared a state of emergency in Tennessee yesterday morning. We want parents and employees to know that we are closely monitoring this situation and will continue to follow the guidelines and recommendations of the CDC, as well as our local, state, and federal agencies.

Like most organizations, our response to this outbreak has been and will continue to be multi-faceted. In addition to being hyper-focused on the cleanliness of our facilities, we have encouraged students and staff to stay home and consult with medical professionals when they exhibit flu-like symptoms. At all levels, we continue to reinforce best practices for good hygiene and know our parents are doing the same at home. Our district administration and school leadership teams are working through spring break to define the many specific ways we will respond to this ever-changing situation in the weeks and months ahead.

Out of an abundance of caution, when spring break ends we will require all employees to self-report recent travel to international destinations listed as Level 3 by the CDC, cruise ship travel, as well as U.S. travel to high incident locales with confirmed cases of COVID-19. Likewise, we will ask all student families to follow the same reporting process, but on a voluntary basis. The reporting process for both employees and students will be defined and communicated later next week. It is also important for our staff and families to know that absences due to exposure and self-quarantine would be met in a completely non-punitive and compassionate manner. Our responsibility is for the health and safety of everyone on our campuses and we feel strongly that you share our commitment to that priority. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

One more thing, despite what you may have heard around town, our plan at this moment is that all staff and students will return to school as scheduled on March 23. If that changes for any reason we will share the details through all available communication channels – voice message, email, text message, website, social media, as well as local print and broadcast media. Should the state or federal government mandate a COVID-19 response for all schools, we will share that information as well.

In the meantime, my hope is that you and your family remain well and focused on having a restful and enjoyable spring break. We are blessed to live in a community where caring for our neighbors is just “what we do” and please know that any actions we take as this crisis unfolds are for the protection of our children, our employees, and this community.

Dr. Mike Winstead, Director of Schools

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