



UPPER DEERFIELD TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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Good Evening Parents/Guardians,

For the past few weeks Coronavirus – COVID 19 has dominated the news. We are in a situation that calls for us to remain vigilant and attentive to the experts from the CDC, WHO, New Jersey Department of Health and our local Cumberland County Department of Health. Much information is being provided on this outbreak and it is imperative to heed all information shared from those who are well-versed to provide the proper education and guidance in these instances. At present, our district is remaining focused on our cleaning protocols using the Clorox 360 machines that have proven effective in containing the spread of viruses including the Coronavirus. However, that does not mean we are to be lax in cleansing protocols as this virus has not been fully mitigated at the present time.

There have been schools in our area that have closed or are planning to close for half-days or full days, to clean the schools in their districts. At this time Upper Deerfield will remain open as our protocols for cleaning and the use of the machines are recommended by the CDC and EPA for this and other types of viruses. However, reports continue to unfold about online and digital learning that many districts are working toward. There are many questions that go along with this thinking and, questions are more prevalent than answers.

As our administrative team continues to meet and discuss how can we implement an appropriate learning environment for every student, there is some uncertainty that remains. While digital learning appears to be a logical approach to temporarily remedy the public health issue that we're facing, it may not be the most viable. We can address the needs of many of our students through the use of a virtual platforms or google, the reality is there remains a portion of our population that would require academic supports that cannot be met without being in a school setting. In addition, the Federal Meal regulations concerning provisions to provide breakfast and lunch to our students adds to the complexity of any proposed remedy to a school closing.

A survey to parents regarding technology and internet access at home will be distributed to determine the adequacy and level of internet service and devices for the feasibility of digital readiness in our district. We are meeting with our staff and our March 20 in-service is dedicated to the implementation of our plan in the event we are notified of a mandated closure. Currently, there are no plans to close and, in a recent conference call with the State Public Health Department, Governor, and Commissioner of Education, the point of emphasis was on preparation, proactive approaches to keeping the schools clean, and using common sense by practicing the following protocols that we ask you emphasize with your children:

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, everyday preventive actions can help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:

- Wash your hands often;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth;
- Stay home when you are sick;
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

We will continue to follow the guidance of the CDC, State and Local Health Officials, Department of Education, and our Governor in preparing for any directive that is given for this situation.

The Department of Education issued the following statement about the plans and closure scenario:

“The plan will go into effect only when the DOH gives the district a written directive to close. Be very careful. If you (meaning us as a district) decide to close for precautionary reasons, the online learning or other plans that are not normally acceptable to fulfill the daily requirements for attendance will NOT count as days towards the 180-day requirement.”

There is a conference call later this week with the Federal Departments of Education, Health and Agriculture. As we are approaching the testing season, we will be looking at any flexibility with testing schedules if districts are required to close by the Department of Health and also address the absenteeism guidelines during this time.

In light of these concerns over the coronavirus (COVID-19), I can't stress enough the importance of hygiene and remind all of us that your health and safety are important to us and it is imperative to prepare and educate yourself and your children.

Here are some great resources from the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**:

How it spreads:

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes; but, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Symptoms:

- For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms can include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- The New Jersey Department of Health has a 24-hour hotline (1-800-222-1222) for the public to ask questions.
- This hotline provides factual information to alleviate fear and dispel rumors. New Jersey is continuing to work closely with the CDC and local health partners to monitor the situation and will provide updates accordingly.

For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Please be assured we are taking all preventive measures as recommended by the CDC and our State and County Health Departments. We will continue monitor our schools and share any information we have during this period of uncertainty that needs our attention and dedicated resources to address this in the best possible manner for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,

Peter L. Koza Ed. D.

Peter L. Koza, Ed., D., Superintendent

