

**MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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March 6, 2020

Good afternoon Merrimack Community-

As a follow up to this morning's communication, I would like to provide the following update regarding the district's response to COVID-19.

The attached document, issued directly by the CDC, provides guidance to schools which do not have COVID-19 identified in their community. I specifically draw your attention to the following guidance and the district's response to it:

**Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs).**

Earlier today, at a meeting at Town Hall, I joined the town manager, police chief, fire chief and related staff to discuss our collective response to COVID-19 if it presents itself in our community. We all agreed that we will consistently follow CDC and state health officials' guidelines related to preparations for, and response to, COVID-19. Additional information about this collective response will come next week after we participate in the state's weekly teleconference with community leaders throughout New Hampshire during which time we will receive updated information from CDC through the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies.

**Develop information-sharing systems with partners.**

As indicated above, this process is currently underway with our partners in the town, including police and fire, to ensure thorough and consistent information sharing.

**Monitor and plan for absenteeism.**

The school district leadership team has already met and discussed that should any student or staff member become ill with COVID-19, the district will provide supports necessary to help them through their period of illness. Should any student or staff member become ill with COVID-19, please see the school principal to discuss the appropriate accommodations.

## **Establish procedures for students and staff who are sick at school.**

Please read this section in the attached document very carefully. Currently, there are no students or staff in the Merrimack School District who are ill with COVID-19. Should that situation change, the district will follow all procedures for such an event as outlined by the CDC. The school district will of course partner with parents and all community members to ensure proper response in the event of COVID-19 illness in our community, but we must also rely on those same community members to share in the responsibility for prevention as well as in the effort to minimize spread should it become necessary to do so in the event of actual illness in Merrimack.

## **Create communications plans for use with the school community.**

This effort is on-going and evolving, and we are trying to communicate as quickly as we can even while the situation remains dynamic. The district will continue to provide updates on COVID-19 as information changes and is updated. We are doing our best to provide current and factual information to our community members and stake holders when it is received and after it has been verified. In some cases, there may be a lag in communication. As you know, information moves very swiftly these days but we must be assured that the information we provide to our community is both timely AND factual. For that reason, there may, on occasion, be a delay in response time to changing events as we work to verify the source and ensure that the information is helpful and true to the best of our knowledge. Again, in order to achieve this goal, the district is acting on recommendations from CDC and state health officials, and we await their updates as they work to address the COVID-19 issue.

## **Childcare and K-12 administrators can also support their school community by sharing resources.**

We have sent, and will continue to send, information to the community regarding COVID-19 preparation both in the home and at school. Much information that may be public about this and other illnesses may nevertheless be inaccurate or out of context and we encourage you to seek information from verifiable sources like your medical provider and/or the CDC at the following link [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19). We will continue to do our best to provide timely and accurate information to our school district community. Please review all the links in the attached document for important reliable and current information from the CDC, bearing in mind that all information is subject to change as new information becomes available.

In light of the goal of providing accurate and timely information, I wish to share the following update in regards to students or staff who have recently traveled to any of the four Level 3 countries. The Merrimack School District, like many other districts, contracts with a number of service providers who are not employees of the district but who on occasion work in our schools to provide specific and sometimes specialized services to students. These service providers are employed by outside agencies. We have been working hard with those outside agencies to determine who, among their staffs, may have traveled recently to any of the four Level 3 countries. At this point, we now understand that one such service provider at the high school has shared that they recently returned from one of those four Level 3 countries. We have worked with that

individual's employer to arrange for their self-quarantine, as recommended by CDC. That individual is not symptomatic. Nevertheless, they will remain on self-quarantine for 14 days, as recommended by the CDC, and we will make alternative arrangements with the appropriate outside agents for coverage of these services during their period of absence. Again, even though this is not a staff member of the Merrimack School District, we share this information with you because of services that they have performed recently at Merrimack High School. In addition, please know that the instructional spaces used by both individuals have been cleaned according to CDC guidelines, as a precaution.

Finally, it is important to note that recommendations about COVID-19 response have been updated throughout the week by the CDC and state health officials and we have worked to adjust our response according to those recommendations. As just one example, as recently as Monday the CDC did not require travelers returning from any of the Level 3 countries to self-quarantine if they were not symptomatic. But by Wednesday, that recommendation changed to request that travelers recently returned from any of those Level 3 countries to self-quarantine even if they were not symptomatic. The district responded to that updated CDC guideline as reflected in my letter of March 4. Therefore, it is possible, if not likely, that continued updates will be forthcoming requiring us to refine our practices in light of changing events. We will continue to act in accordance with any additional updated recommendations from the CDC and state health officials. We appreciate your patience as we work together to manage this evolving situation.

Sincerely,

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent of Schools