March 6, 2020

Dear Northstar Families,

On a daily basis we are inundated with so much information about the current flu season and coronavirus (COVID-19).  Because the health of the Northstar community - students, staff and families - is our priority, I wanted to take a moment to provide some helpful information as well as additional details about our effort to protect our school community.

During the course of our preparation, I reached out to one of our Board members, Dr. Richard Bennett, a local pediatrician, for guidance. Currently, there have been no confirmed cases in Virginia to date.  However, we are monitoring the situation closely so we are ready should it appear the coronavirus will impact daily instruction.

At this time, the best guidance has been **prevention**, whether it’s a cold, the flu or coronavirus.  What does this mean for you and your family? From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

·         Wash your hands often with soap AND water for at least 20 seconds (singing the ‘Happy Birthday’ song while you wash is a good estimate of washing for 20 seconds).  Wash your hands after sneezing or coughing and before preparing food and before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

·         Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

·         Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

·         Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.

·         Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.  A Northstar reminder, you should be fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication before returning to school.

·         Avoid close contact (such as hugging, kissing, sharing cups, etc.) with people who are sick.

This week, our school nurse, Ms. Johnson began meeting with Advisory classes to provide the above information.  We ask that you also please talk with your student about the need for good personal hygiene.

Finally, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the psychological impact of this situation. The organized worldwide response to coronavirus has been robust and generally encouraging. However, it has also been a challenge for some students to process. [This New York Times article](https://parenting.nytimes.com/childrens-health/coronavirus-kids-talk?module=ptg-onsite-share&type=link), shared with me, gives some good strategies on how to talk to children about coronavirus without raising the anxiety of anyone involved.  I would also ask you to please remind your student this virus does not discriminate and they should not blame a student or particular race for this virus.

We will continue to communicate with families via email and ConnectEd as appropriate regarding any needed changes.  In the meantime, we encourage families and staff to refer to the following websites for additional information related specifically to the coronavirus.

·         [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

·         [Virginia Health Department](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/)

·         [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

Thank you for working with us as we continue to prepare for and respond to this constantly evolving situation.  As always, I remain available for questions or concerns. Please feel free to email me at ctrent@northstaracadmey.net or call me at 804-747-1003 x 1003.