



SERVING BOXFORD, MIDDLETON & TOPSFIELD • 20 ENDICOTT ROAD, BOXFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01921

February 27, 2020

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you today with information regarding the new coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, first identified in Wuhan, China in late December 2019.

As you know, the vast majority of reported cases of COVID-19 are in China. Confirmed cases of this respiratory virus associated with travel from Wuhan are also being reported in a growing number of countries, including the United States. Some person-to-person spread of this virus outside China has been detected but, again, the risk to Massachusetts residents remains low at this time. At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high.

The Masconomet Regional School District wants to assure you that we are receiving the latest information from DPH and CDC and will monitor this situation very closely. At this time, our focus is on prevention education (just like the regular flu season) and symptom surveillance. Your School Nurses are trained and prepared for this situation. We will continue to work with these agencies and the local boards of health in order to provide you with updates as they become available.

It is important to note that Massachusetts residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to COVID-19. Many of the precautions that help prevent colds and the flu can help protect against other respiratory viruses such as COVID-19. To assist us in keeping students healthy, we ask your help and cooperation in following the simple and effective preventative measures below.

#### **ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES DURING INCREASED FLU AWARENESS**

- Please report absences, and reason for absence, with symptoms. “John is absent today with a fever of 101.2.” “Sue has a persistent cough and will not be in today.” “Will has a physical/orthodontic appointment”. Notify the nurse of any recent travel to Iran, Korea, China or Italy.
- Please note that, at this time, your School Nurses will be quick to dismiss any student who is exhibiting any flu-like symptoms. We ask your patience and understanding as we try to prevent and isolate any signs of flu illness in our schools.
- If your child is not feeling well or, has an elevated temperature in the morning, please do not give a medication, such as a fever reducer, and send him/her to school. Keep the child home and monitor the symptoms. If you are unsure of what to do, please call your child’s health care provider.

**Here are some of the important things Masco is doing as a district to help prevent the spread of flu and other viruses here at school:**

- School staff will also stay home when sick with flu symptoms, cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, and wash their hands often.
- The schools are cleaned regularly, per CDC recommendations, especially where germs are most likely to be located. This includes more frequent cleaning during peak periods of the flu.
- Hand sanitizer is available prior to entering the cafeteria. Remind your child to take advantage of this.
- School nurses will work closely with local and state public health authorities and continue to provide illness surveillance.
- School and public health officials will be focused on preventing the spread of flu in school so that the schools can stay open. They will closely follow the situation and will inform you in the **unlikely** event that your child's school is closed.

**Here are some additional things you can do to help stop the spread of germs and protect yourself and your family from the flu.**

- Get vaccinated! It is not too late to get your child the influenza vaccine. Vaccination is still the best way to keep you and your child from getting the flu.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into inside of elbow, not hands.
- Instruct your child to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- Use hand sanitizer when soap and water not available. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol.
- While playing sports and engaging in other recreational activities, students should avoid sharing water bottles, sharing drinks, or sharing mouthpieces,

Resources

- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health recommends the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website for updated information, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. A link to this website and district updates can also be found on [Masconomet's Health Services website](#).
- The Coronavirus is a respiratory illness, click on the [Coronavirus Fact Sheet](#) for signs and symptoms.

Please don't hesitate to call our Health Services Office at extension 31090 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael M. Harvey, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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Interim Health Services Director