

Dear Members of the ACS Community,

Currently there is understandable concern across the globe and within our own community regarding the new strain of coronavirus, COVID-19. I want to assure you that ACS takes these concerns very seriously and, led by school nurse Rose Ciccione and our administrative leadership team, we are proactively addressing the challenges. Our primary source of factual information, guidelines, and suggestions is the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and our decision-making is based on their best informed, science-based research. To that end we encourage parents to go directly to their website for [specific questions or to better understand the virus itself](#), as well as what constitutes things like a “pandemic” or outbreak.

We are actively following our current health guidelines for all communicable viruses. At the end of this email you will see a list of specific guidelines we ask all members of the community to follow. One specific protocol is that we will require a doctor’s note for any student who is absent because of an illness of three days or more. I also want to highlight what one member of the CDC has said which cannot be overstated—and that is to **wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands**. This one simple action can make a big difference and we will be actively reminding students and adults here to do so.

Beyond the virus itself we know there are concerns about what will happen if we have to close school, as well as questions about our middle school class trips this spring and summer. In terms of a potential school closure, I want to emphasize that we absolutely have the capability for using technology and online, remote learning. With leadership from Anna Lenhardt and Lisa Wiltz, our teachers across the school are beginning to look at specific options for students. A lot will depend on the age, grade, and subject matter of a student, as well as the potential length of a school closure. What makes sense for a Group 6 class may likely be either inappropriate or impossible to do for a child in EC. However, what is important is that we are carefully looking at options and possibilities.

As far as school trips are concerned, we will continue to follow CDC guidelines. Right now there is no reason to consider cancelling any of the trips. However, there is good reason to begin to think about what potential alternatives might be possible. As with our regular classes and experiences, our faculty and staff are very creative and thoughtful, and I am confident that they will rise to the occasion and offer whatever experiences possible under what will be clearly challenging conditions.

As a school our focus remains first and foremost the safety of all of our community members, and our decisions will be based with this priority goal. But I want to close by emphasizing the special nature of ACS as a welcoming and diverse community. Physical safety is obvious. Emotional safety is equally important but sometimes less obvious or visible. This new coronavirus potentially affects all humans. It does not choose one ethnicity over another. As a school community and as a global community we “are all in this together” and it worries me that people are scared to eat at Chinese restaurants or are “shunning” and targeting certain ethnic backgrounds. Obviously if travel should be limited in certain regions then we need to adhere and follow those guidelines. But they need to be grounded in science, and for us, by recommendations from the CDC. Not by unfounded fears. We have people in our community who need to know they are neither the cause or the continuation of a virus that, unlike humankind, does not discriminate. ACS stands for doing what’s right even when there is understandable fear. Let us all find the courage to remain united and firm in protecting the safety of all members of the ACS community.

Please do not hesitate to reach out directly to Nurse Ciccione or me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Paul

PS: I am currently in Philadelphia attending the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). They literally just scheduled a special session tonight on the coronavirus offered by the President of NAIS and legal counsel. I will be attending and will send an update to our community if I learn more about what ACS can and should be doing.

Guidelines for Handling Possible Coronavirus at ACS:

- Students or adults who have any of these symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, or inability to handle their own coughing or sneezing will visit the nurse for an assessment. They will wear a respiratory mask until they leave the building.
- The person's doctor should be contacted by the family and all appropriate testing should be performed.
- With all calls to the attendance line, parents or guardians should include specific symptoms and whether a healthcare provider was seen. A doctor's note will be required for absences longer than three days.
- The nurse will track illnesses in the school and report to the DuPage County Health Department as necessary.
- The nurse will communicate with the school community regarding communicable diseases.
- Students will check in with the nurse before returning to school if there has been travel outside the United States within 14 days of the return to school, or close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus.
- Students should stay home if sick, drink plenty of fluids, eat a healthy diet, and get plenty of rest.
- Staff will stress with students to wash hands often, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into their elbow, and not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Custodial staff will ensure that classroom/common areas are stocked with soap and sanitizer. Desk tops, door knobs, light switches, computer keyboards, and computer mouse(s), telephones and other frequently touched surfaces will be disinfected.

Note: IDPH along with the Illinois Poison Center has set up a hotline for residents across the state to call if they have questions about this new coronavirus, COVID-19. Residents in Illinois, outside Chicago can call the hotline at 800-889-3931 or email DPH.SICK@illinois.gov.

Sincerely,

Paul Druzinsky

Head of School