

Dear ACS Families,

I want share a follow-up to my message last week regarding the COVID-19 strain of Coronavirus. As we all know, the information and the general news is changing by the minute, but here is what we have to share today. Our efforts to date are very much in-line with all of the recommendations we learned at the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conference. We are doing virtually everything our peer schools across the country are doing. My own email has been flooded with information and examples from other schools and universities—it is important to note that while many of our responses are the same, there are differences in what boarding high schools, colleges, universities and global corporate companies are facing. At our conference it was emphasized that schools should first and foremost follow the recommendations of the CDC and the local health agency of a given school—which we are already are doing—and that each school should be guided by the needs of its own culture and make-up. This is critical, as we are a nursery-8th grade day school with our own unique campus and wonderfully diverse population. Our decisions will be based on both the needs of our community and what we believe will best keep us all safe.

Specifically, here are the steps we have taken in the last week:

1. I addressed students in groups 1-8 on Monday with general words of acknowledgement about the novel coronavirus, with the intention of helping to reassure them we are doing all we can to keep them safe. I mentioned increased hand washing, and that our teachers are following up with classes by grade in these efforts.
2. We have hired additional cleaning staff for the remainder of the school year in order to disinfect all surfaces (desks, tables, counters, etc.) as well as door handles on a daily basis.
3. We are using alcohol-based cleansers and erring on the side of stronger cleansers at this time.
4. Our teachers are now meeting on a weekly basis to plan ahead in the event that we have to close school for a period of time. This planning includes continued exploration of the best online resources, and other creative avenues for learning away from school.
5. Our tech department is working with Lisa, Anna, and even some students to utilize online learning now, to practice and see what is possible, *before* it is actually needed, as well as to trouble-shoot and see where potential problems may arise.

And finally, we are creating a page on our website that will have our Coronavirus information and links to suggested websites for additional information. We will also use the website for updates as needed—although of course I will send critical information directly to you if the need arises. We will have this page up and running next week.

I want to close by saying that one of the traits of our community is that our parent and teacher/staff is made up of some pretty smart people, who have a life-long commitment to learning and seeking knowledge. I say this because my job as Head of School is to ensure that we are following all protocols in keeping the community safe, and to ensure that, as I stated

earlier, *science, not fear or panic*, will be our guiding light. Schools must be a source of information to their communities, and I promise that I and ACS will stay on top of this in these critical times. However, I should not be seen as the “expert” in Coronavirus! There are doctors, scientists, and health professionals who have dedicated their careers to become the real pros in health and medicine, and you should also look to them as you manage your own family choices and decisions in your daily lives. They are the experts I look to in protecting ACS, and most of what I can offer is based on what I learn from them.

My advice in my role as Head of School is to keep level-headed, and manage your own fears and anxieties around these issues, which in turn keeps your children calm and helps them manage their own fears—that is your job as parents. We will keep your children as safe as we can from the virus itself. However, when students here make xenophobic remarks about their peers, or their peer’s parents and ethnicities as they relate to the Coronavirus, it is typically because of what they hear or see outside of school. I said it last week and will say it again, as Heritage Fest, one of our great, inclusive, diverse, and celebratory traditions takes place Friday—we must stand as one against a virus that unemotionally and biologically hurts all. We cannot let the emotional turmoil of this crisis become worse than the virus itself, and I ask for everybody’s help and support in combating the potential “collateral damage” if emotions win out.

Sincerely,

Paul Druzinsky