



Bristol Township School District

5 Blue Lake Road, Levittown, PA 19057

215-943-3200

March 10, 2020

Dear Bristol Township School District Parents/Guardians, Staff, and Community:

I am aware of the heightened anxiety and concern that is present in our families and the wider community at this time regarding the possible spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). I want to assure you that as Superintendent of Bristol Township School District, I remain committed to providing you with information to help in planning and preparing for a potential impact of this illness.

Yesterday, the Bucks County Intermediate Unit arranged a conference call with county officials to provide school entities with an update on the current state of the virus. Participating in the call were Dr. David Damsker, Director of the Bucks County Health Department, Scott Forester, Director of Bucks County Emergency Management Services, Dr. Mark Hoffman, Executive Director of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, myself, and the other superintendents and administrators from each of the thirteen school districts in the county. I appreciated having the opportunity to discuss COVID-19 with county officials and my fellow school district colleagues. In the most recent conversation today with Dr. Damsker the following is what was learned:

Status of Current Cases of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in Pennsylvania

- At this moment, there are eleven (11) presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.
- Counties impacted to-date include one (1) individual from Delaware County, eight (8) individuals from Montgomery County, one (1) individual from Monroe County and one (1) individual from Wayne County.
- **There are no diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in Bucks County.**
- All individuals who have been diagnosed in Pennsylvania, were exposed to the virus by direct contact with a diagnosed individual residing outside of the country or outside of the Commonwealth.
- **There is no community spread of the virus in Bucks County at this time.**
- Children are not believed to be at a serious risk for the illness, and to-date not a single individual worldwide, under the age of fifteen, has died from the virus.
- Those who have the highest risk are individuals with a weakened immune system; pregnant women; and/or those age sixty (60) and over.

Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the common flu virus and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

These symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as fourteen or more days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from individuals with no symptom to becoming severely ill and dying.

How the Virus is Spread

The virus is spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing
 - For the safety of our community, students brought to the nurse's office for coughing will be offered a face mask.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it

How to Protect You and Your Family

The single best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is by washing your hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds several times throughout the day.

Other ways to help prevent the spread of the illness include:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. **Do not use your hands!**
- Use a sixty percent (60%) or higher alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes and other frequently touched items.
- Contain: If you are sick, stay home until you feel better. Sick students and/or staff should not return to school until they are fever-free for a minimum of twenty-four hours without medication.

Actions the School District is Taking

Enhanced Cleaning Protocols

In order to minimize exposure of our students and staff, our custodial staff and bus drivers are utilizing enhanced flu-season cleaning protocols which also eliminate the coronavirus.

Student and Staff Travel

Upon the recommendation of Dr. Damsker, Director of the Bucks County Health Department, all Bucks County Superintendents were advised to cancel all planned international travel out of the country for any students or staff. To that end, the upcoming trip to Italy has been postponed until 2021.

For the current time, out of state travel is being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. More information will follow.

As of today, local field trips will continue as planned.

School Closings

At the current time, all school district buildings are open and operating at normal capacity. There are no plans to close or cancel any school extracurricular events.

If directed by Dr. Damsker or other health authorities, there may be a need to cancel large gatherings scheduled to be held in the buildings or on school grounds.

It is also possible, that in the event of an extreme situation, one or more of our schools could close, based on guidance and direction from the Bucks County Health Department and/or the Pennsylvania Department of Health. I encourage you to prepare for a school closure which could potentially range from a single day in order to deep clean the school building to an extended duration to help mitigate the spread of any illness in our community. These closures, if warranted, could occur on short notice. Now is the time to create your family plan should some or all of our schools have to close.

I am hopeful that COVID-19 does not cause a health emergency in our area. However, I want to assure you that our school district is taking all precautions and is preparing to take any necessary actions, acting in conjunction with recommendations from our local and state authorities. Please know that I will continue to update you of any changes.

Thank you for your help in keeping our schools and community safe. Additional information can be found at www.btsd.us under the News link COVID 19 Updates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melanie Gehrens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melanie" being more prominent than the last name "Gehrens".

Melanie Gehrens, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools