

Principal's Notes
March 18, 2020
*****SPECIAL EDITION*****

Dear Lyseth Parents,

We ask that you please read this important communication from Superintendent Botana, issued late yesterday afternoon:

Portland Public Schools Families: Social distancing critical to keep everyone safe
By Xavier Botana

The new coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is evolving rapidly, and the Portland Public Schools has closed all its facilities until March 30. We are transitioning to remote learning and have arranged for the distribution of school meals. I'm writing here now with another important message: It's critical for families and students to also do their part during this crisis to help keep everyone safe.

We recognize the hardship that the school closure represents for families and our staff. I didn't make the decision to close lightly – it was an extremely difficult choice but we determined that it is the most responsible one to protect everyone's health. Our students and families also need to take this situation very seriously. Everyone should understand the very real potential for additional community spread of the virus if they don't practice "social distancing."

It's important that families don't think of this closure as a series of "snow days" in which students are free to indulge in any social activity they want because the learning will be made-up at a later date. Activities like gathering in groups, holding sleepovers, going out to eat or have coffee with friends and roaming the neighborhood will potentially add to community spread of the virus. . Parents, I'm asking you to please take responsibility for suspending these activities and limiting your family's social contact as much as possible!



***Social distancing is socially responsible during this crisis.** Please read: "Social Distancing: This is Not a Snow Day," by Dr. Asaf Bitton.*

<https://www.ariadnelabs.org/resources/articles/news/social-distancing-this-is-not-a-snow-day/>

Families, please also make clear to your children that this is not a holiday from learning. Remote learning begins Wednesday, March 18. Schools will be taking attendance and we are establishing expectations for work completion.

I sent a letter to families on March 16 that details how families will be able to access learning materials and tech devices. The letter also details how our Food Service Department will begin distributing meals starting March 18 to students 18 and under at these sites: Riverton, East End, Presumpscot, Rowe and Peaks Island elementary schools, King and Lyman Moore middle schools and Deering High School. Families should go to the site most convenient for them.

Read my letter here.

https://www.portlandschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1094153/File/News%20Items/COVID-19%20Letter%20to%20Families%20March%2016.pdf

When picking up food at our distribution sites, we encourage families to continue to be proactive in reducing the risk of COVID-19 by not congregating at the sites once meals have been distributed. Also, to maximize social distancing, families are asked to only come to pick up learning materials at distribution sites/your child's school if your child is not able to access the materials online. Please only pick up tech devices if your child doesn't have an alternate device at home.

I will add here that, given the challenges around the COVID-19 crisis, I have withdrawn from my recommended FY21 school budget a proposal to implement a reconfiguration of our elementary schools. I feel it's responsible to take a step back and work on an implementation plan with a longer timeline. With public meetings curtailed because of the virus, it would be difficult to have a meaningful public discussion about the proposal at this time. I propose implementation in the 2021-2022 school year, which will give us time to engage the community in this important step towards a more equitable system.

The evolving nature of this pandemic is uncharted territory. However, we will be able to confront the challenges it poses if we all pull together as a community in support of our students. Stay safe.



Portland Public Schools COVID-19 Links, and Distance Learnings Links:

General COVID-19 Information:

<https://sites.google.com/a/portlandschools.org/pps-health-services/home/coronavirus-information>

Additional COVID-19 Information:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14jWe6aV8Fm-O6f-STIFBHM5WnEKEM9iPSpD-I7CxKn8/edit>

Parent Resources:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jrb-Mc46n2_ZGo1rgZg0jjNTFrYtuxMDkZMw_PDHwm8/edit

Three Day Learning Packets K - 5

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HKIZXFPiNJGuYUcdbcBZ42QO_ZZ_FDBa-MSCS76NjPQ/edit

Please read this important information from the Portland Public Schools Nurses:

We understand that the Novel Coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is causing much anxiety in our community, country and the world. We are working hard to provide you with the most up to date information on this rapidly evolving situation. The following is a brief overview of the current situation. For more information and FAQ's, we recommend you visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/covid-19> and continue to check our website for updates and guidance.

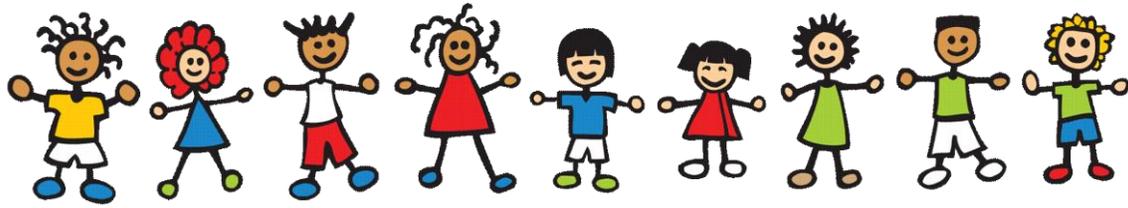
More information on the virus can be found at the [COVID-19 PPS Information Center](#) on our website.

What is Known

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in China had mild disease, including most children.
- Similar to influenza, the people who are most likely to have severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>60 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19 but the National Institutes of Health is evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine already.
- **Currently, there is NO confirmed community spread of COVID-19 in Maine, meaning the virus is not being spread from person-to-person. However, experts predict there will eventually be community spread. Our schools are preparing for when/if this happens. UPDATE**

How The Virus Spreads

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms; there have been reports of this with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.



What You Can Do Now

- Keep children home when they are sick.
Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.
- Teach your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom and before they eat.
- Tell children to avoid touching their mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (everyday household disinfectants are fine)
 - Enhance cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet handles, and sink handles.
 - Plan for when community spread occurs.
 - Ensure you have a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for a sick child(ren) if you can't stay home.
 - Know your child's school plan to communicate with you when needed, such as robocalls, email or checking their website.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that we will be closing schools is very low, but not zero. In the highly unlikely chance that a decision to close school due to a COVID-19 outbreak is made, it is important for parents/guardians to have a plan for who could take care of your child.

We are receiving updates as The Maine Department of Education is working directly with Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor this evolving situation. We will continue to provide new information to the community as things change.

Lyseth PTA Newsletter link

Lyseth students are fortunate to have an amazing, supportive PTA! Through their efforts, Lyseth students benefit in so many ways, as you will see in their informative newsletter! Please check it out:

<https://us3.campaign-archive.com/?e=028d88b69e&u=9b584aaffc59a7a88d57e58d7&id=7be61b3494>

NOTE: The paper version of the Notes can be accessed on the Lyseth website at

https://lyseth.portlandschools.org/about_us/principals_notes