



Somerville Public Schools

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Dear SPS Families and Staff,

We are continuing to monitor the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, working with local health officials and other city departments. While state health officials continue to indicate that the risk in Massachusetts is low, we want to assure you that we are taking all necessary precautions and steps to quickly address any increased risk that might arise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a protocol for students / families returning from foreign trips where Coronavirus is more present. We encourage you to visit the CDC website (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) regularly for updates.

The City of Somerville is posting frequent COVID-19 updates to their Coronavirus Information website (www.somervillema.gov/coronavirus). Please check the website for the latest updates. We also encourage you to register for Somerville Community Alerts at www.somervillema.gov/alerts to ensure that you receive critical updates sent through their alert system.

We have created a district Coronavirus Information web page (www.somerville.k12.ma.us/coronavirus-information-prevention) where we will post all notices that go out to families. The site includes links to the city Coronavirus website as well as links to other pertinent sites. The new page can be accessed from our district home page as one of the six featured categories (see screen capture below).



Prevention

- *Community Effort:* Limiting the spread of illness takes a community effort. We appreciate you doing your part by taking all necessary precautions and talking with your children about critical prevention steps such as frequent and thorough hand-washing.
- *Handwashing:* We cannot emphasize enough how important frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) is to preventing the spread of this and other respiratory diseases. We are continuing to reinforce this message with students and staff on a daily basis and appreciate your assistance in modeling and sharing this important practice at home as well.
- *School Cleanings:* Somerville DPW is conducting additional cleanings at all of our schools and other SPS buildings, particularly focusing on heavily used areas, and cleaning handrails and doorknobs throughout the day.
- *“Wash your hands” posters* will be posted at all city buildings, schools, and other district buildings.
- *School and Other District Building Signage:* One of the ways in which we can help prevent the spread of illness is by reducing the amount of direct contact with people exhibiting signs of illness, such as coughing or sneezing.

Starting this week, we will be posting signage at all of our school buildings asking all visitors, including parents and guardians, to assist us in helping keep the spread of illness at bay by dropping students off at the front door and not lingering inside school buildings if they are exhibiting any signs of illness (such as coughing or sneezing). We are also asking that individuals who have recently traveled to any of the high-risk areas listed as Level 3 or Level 2 by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>), or anyone with a suspected case of COVID-19 not enter our buildings until after they have completed the mandatory or self-imposed quarantine period, as recommended by the CDC.

- *Enrollment Center Protocol:* We are asking that individuals who are exhibiting signs of some illness, such as a cough or sneezing, please register online (www.somerville.k12.ma.us/enrollment). If you need support during this process, please call the Enrollment Center (formerly PIC) at (617) 625-6600, x6962. To minimize the risk of spread of illness, individuals who stop in to the Enrollment Center and are presenting symptoms of some illness will be asked to wear a mask and to see the nurse for evaluation as the first step in their enrollment process.
- *Field Trips:* We are carefully reviewing all out of state field trip requests for any additional risk, working in consultation with HHS, and have been notifying trip organizers of any trip cancellations. We recognize that field trips are an important learning experience for students, however, given the importance of taking precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the unknown risks of COVID-19, minimizing the risk to our students and staff will be the primary deciding factor.

Our **planning efforts** to date include the following:

- District and City Coronavirus Task Forces are meeting regularly to develop protocols to follow in the event of a Coronavirus incident, working closely with Health and Human Services to ensure that plans are informed by recommended health practices.
- We are participating in regular conference calls with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and will be following DESE guidance on potential academic and schedule impacts in the event of necessary school closures.
- We are contacting out-of-district sites and families to ensure that there are plans in place for continuing services for out-of-district students.
- We realize that some of our families rely on us for basic needs such as daily breakfast and lunch, and are preparing contingency plans in the event of a school closure.
- The district Instructional Leadership Team is working on an academic plan should coronavirus lead to a classroom or school closure.
- Protocols are in place for additional cleaning if needed.
- We are contacting bus companies, partner organizations, and other non-SPS personnel who work with or support our students to ensure that they have a COVID-19 protocol in place, and asking that they let us know immediately if at any point they or someone in their organization who works in our schools are self-quarantined or are diagnosed with the virus.

We will continue to update you as we learn more and appreciate your support in taking all recommended precautions.

Sincerely,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent