

Dear Holliston Staff, Parents and Guardians:

Given the recent uptick in publicity regarding the new coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, some parents and staff have inquired about how Holliston Public Schools is dealing with this potential concern. The purpose of this email is to provide the community with up-to-date information (as of Thursday, February 27, 2020) and some resources to monitor should you require additional information.

Here in Holliston, we are monitoring the situation through the Superintendent's office, the School Nurse Leader and Holliston's Emergency Management Director, Fire Chief Michael Cassidy. We are in daily contact with one another and receiving timely updates from both the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, Superintendents from across the Commonwealth are coordinating their local response to insure thoughtful and appropriate actions are being taken to protect our schools and, most importantly, the people who are in them every day.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has shared guidance for school administrators and school health personnel regarding the new coronavirus. As of this writing, Massachusetts has one confirmed case of COVID-19 and **DPH states that the risk to Massachusetts residents remains low**. In the US, there are only 53 cases confirmed. Only one of these cases was confirmed to be passed through human contact (husband to wife). At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high. DPH advises that residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold or the flu than to be exposed to COVID-19. The guidance letter sent to all schools is available at the DPH website at: www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus. Here is a useful fact sheet in many languages to assist you in learning about this virus: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19#-printable-fact-sheets->

Still, it is important to be proactive. In that spirit, I share the following precautions, recommended by DPH, to help prevent colds, flu and to protect against COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If unable to wash, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (NOT with your hands);
- Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.

The last point is important to emphasize. It is critical that children or staff not come to school when they are ill. If a child or staff member has any of the following symptoms, please keep them home from school until they have been symptom-free for at least 24-hours:

- Temperature greater than 100.0 degrees (F) prior to the administration of acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil);
- Coughing, vomiting, diarrhea or any rash not yet diagnosed by a medical provider;
- Red or pink itchy eye, and/or drainage from the eye; or
- Any diagnosed contagious illness such as chicken pox, strep throat or flu.

Our school facilities department is vigilantly disinfecting our educational spaces as we typically do during cold and flu season. We are following all of DPH's recommended guidelines in this area.

It is clear that the COVID-19 situation is constantly evolving. We will continue to work closely with other local school districts and local Holliston officials, while monitoring the information coming from the CDC and the Massachusetts DPH. We will update parent/guardians and staff should conditions warrant.

Respectfully,

Bradford L. Jackson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

For up-to-date information regarding the 2019 novel Coronavirus, please visit the DPH COVID-19 web site at www.mass.gov/2019coronavirus

More detailed information and additional guidance is available from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

[Massachusetts DPH Coronavirus Advisory to Schools](#)