

Dear Holliston Parents/Guardians and Staff:

This is the third update issued by the Holliston Public Schools containing the most up-to-date information available as of its publication.

There are currently 92 confirmed or presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Massachusetts, according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). **There are no confirmed or presumptive cases of the virus in Holliston at this time.** Health officials report that the risk of contracting the virus in Massachusetts remains "low." In addition, today, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency for the Commonwealth, effective immediately. This declaration allows the Governor to take state-wide action to address the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts but it has no immediate effects on the day-to-day operations of the Holliston Public Schools. As of today, Holliston schools remain open and operating normally.

I am in daily communication with Health Director for the Town of Holliston, Scott Moles and Emergency Preparedness Director, Fire Chief Michael Cassidy to ensure that we're staying up to date on developments that could affect our community. In addition, a group of MetroWest Health Directors and Superintendents met on Tuesday to share information and work towards developing a common protocol for key decisions we may be facing in the future. I am confident that we're doing everything we can on the local level to keep our students and staff safe and healthy, and I will continue to keep the community updated as this situation develops.

All local actions are being undertaken in accordance with the latest guidelines from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [This includes CDC guidance for school administrators.](#)

The COVID-19 situation is very fluid, and new information and guidelines are being posted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a regular basis. The CDC offers the following [guidance for how COVID-19 spreads](#). The virus is believed to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Today, DESE issued two important advisories that could impact some of our operations moving forward:

1. Districts are urged to cancel any out-of-state travel that they have planned.

Based on this advisory, **I have ordered the cancellation of all student and/or staff out-of-state travel plans scheduled to take place in March and April.** I have also informed the organizers of the non-school-sponsored trip to Washington DC, scheduled to take place during April vacation of DESE's advisory. Impacted families should expect to receive communication from the organizers of that event in the next few days. I have instructed staff to review plans for out-of-state travel scheduled for May and June and suggested they begin to consider in-state alternatives should this advisory continue to be in effect through the end of the school year.

2. Districts are asked to encourage older community members and those at increased risk of illness to avoid large school gatherings.

At his news conference this afternoon, Governor Baker emphasized that he was not cancelling large school-wide events, but rather suggested that the population most at-risk for complications stemming from COVID-19 avoid them. I will review scheduled events with building principals and reach out to Holliston Cable Access (HCAT) and ask them to consider expanding the recording of these events so that our at-risk population can continue to access our great concerts, exhibitions and events.

As always, if anyone displays [symptoms of COVID-19](#), including a fever, cough or shortness of breath, they should not come to work or school and they are advised to contact their primary care physician.

Finally, the DPH emphasizes the importance of good hygiene practices, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds including under your fingernails. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content) can be used when soap and water are not available.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing with a tissue and discard it immediately. Cough into the sleeve over your elbow instead of your hand. Wash your hands often when coughing and sneezing.
- Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.

I will continue to publish updates when conditions warrant. In the meantime, for more information, visit the DPH website by [clicking here](#) and the CDC's website by [clicking here](#).

Respectfully,

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