**FCPS Community Message about Coronavirus COVID-19**

Friday, March 6, 2020

Dear FCPS Community:

FCPS is aware of the Governor’s declaration of a State of Emergency after learning about the first 3 cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) identified in Maryland.

FCPS is actively planning for any potential cases of COVID-19 in our community.  We have been and will continue to partner with local and state health officials.

As described by Governor Hogan, the State of Emergency means that he is officially authorizing and directing the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to expedite coordination among all state and local agencies.  This accelerates coordination with our state and local health departments and emergency management teams.

While the Governor declared a State of Emergency, he also encouraged citizens to remain calm and to go to school and work as they normally do.

For more background information on COVID-19 and local preparedness, please access the following link: [https://health.frederickcountymd.gov/CivicAlerts](https://health.frederickcountymd.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=271)

Older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions have a greater risk for serious illness. Examples of pre-existing conditions are: cancer, diabetes, heart disease or other conditions impacting the ability of the body’s immune system to fight germs.

COVID-19 is thought to be able to spread like the cold or flu through:

* Coughing and sneezing, which creates respiratory droplets
* Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
* Touching an object or surface with the virus on it

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19, however, everyday preventive measures can reduce the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and seasonal influenza. FCPS is encouraging students and staff to take the following actions to reduce the spread of germs and protect against COVID-19 and seasonal influenza:

* Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
* Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose with unwashed hands.
* Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then immediately discard the tissue in the trash and wash hands. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
* Stay home when you are sick (at least 24 hours after there are no signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication).

FCPS custodial staff regularly clean classrooms and common areas to safeguard student and staff health. To minimize the potential spread of germs, staff routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) and ensure students and staff have access to soap and hand sanitizers.

We are closely monitoring this situation in collaboration with state and local health officials.  Based on CDC and Maryland Health Department guidance, FCPS strongly encourages healthy students to continue to maintain regular attendance, supporting their everyday school routines. School Counselors and staff are available to support students who may feel anxious during this time.  We encourage all FCPS families to remain vigilant through this situation and consult your health provider if you are experiencing symptoms (i.e., fever, coughing, shortness of breath) that you may believe are related to the coronavirus. We will continue to provide updates as this situation develops.  We thank the FCPS community for our continued partnership in fostering personal well-being and health among students and staff.