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Email Subject : WMA - Important - Coronavirus Update

Dear Parent,

I am sure that you have heard federal health officials warn that it is very likely just a matter of time before COVID-19 (commonly known as coronavirus) spreads to a greater degree in the US. While there are no current reports of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, as the health and safety of students and our school community is our highest priority, clearly it is time to be planning proactively for potential situations. A significant part of that plan involves partnering with you. To that end we will be:

- reminding you of our standard health and safety practices;
- keeping you informed of updates to our normal protocols;
- creating new plans to address this unique situation;
- passing information and sources of information we receive to you.

#### **Standard WMA Health and Safety Practices**

Waldron Mercy has established health policies that are reviewed annually. In addition, WMA has an Emergency Operation Plan that is aligned with the best practices specified by FEMA and PEMA and is based on the Pennsylvania “All Hazards” School Planning Tool Kit. These plans include a protocol for a pandemic event. As always, we have a focus on prevention. In recognition of that fact, everyone is reminded to:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. Do not use your hands! If you use a tissue, immediately discard the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Here is a three-minute video from the CDC about proper hand washing.
- Students and staff with influenza symptoms, including a fever, a cough or sore throat, should stay home and not attend school or participate in other group activities for at least 24 hours after the fever resolves. For flu prevention tips, [click here](#).

#### **As an organization, for prevention of illness we:**

- Keep a good supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs, and disposable wipes on-site.
- Separate sick students as much as possible from others and send them home as soon as possible.
- Clean daily, especially surfaces that are frequently touched such as bathrooms and lunch tables.

#### **Updates to WMA Health and Safety Protocols**

- We have ordered additional supplies of several of the items needed to prevent the spread of illness: soap, alcohol-based hand rubs, gloves, and disposable wipes. We will continue to evaluate their increased need and the possibility of a limited supply.
- WMA’s Custodial Department provides extra cleaning attention during times of increased illness, particularly to doorknobs, light switches, and desks.
- Teachers are encouraging good hygiene practices and stressing their importance to our students.
- The hand-washing video mentioned above is being shared with all of our students next week.
- WMA has always recorded the number of staff and students absent daily and will now be specifically tracking those reporting flu-like symptoms.

#### **New Plans in Response to COVID-19**

Keep in mind that local and/or federal health officials will step in and provide guidance for WMA should evidence of an infection situation in this area arise. Hopefully they will soon do this proactively, as they did in 2009 with the potential swine flu epidemic. In fact we have been informed that the Montgomery County Health Department is planning to meet with area schools sometime this week. In addition:

- WMA is closely monitoring international and national advisories from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and will be staying in close contact with the Montgomery County Health Department.
- We also are in communication with the School Safety Officer for Montgomery County who provides us with numerous resources from the Montgomery County Department of Health.
- We are asking families and employees to let us know if any members of their household return from international travel.
- Mrs. Candace Flowers, our school nurse, will closely monitor the Montgomery County Health Department website and provide updates to our leadership team.
- A team of administrators – including myself and our Vice-Principal, Director of Finance and Operations, Nurse, and Safety Officer are meeting this week (and will meet regularly) to review our crisis plan, share information from governmental health officials, and plan responses. Work will include:
  - Planning how classes could be held using technology, if school closures are warranted
  - Determining how best to communicate timely and accurate information to students, staff and families
  - Continuing to review and update our policies and procedures with the current information from the CDC, WHO, and PA DOH, including self-quarantining requirements upon return from travel in affected areas
- Evaluating our cleaning processes and products

#### **COVID-19 Information Sources**

- Information from the PA DOH (Department of Health) can be found [here](#)
- Detailed information from the CDC is [here](#)
- Information from the PA DOH for family preparedness is [here](#)

Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we manage this evolving situation.

In Mercy,

Ann Marie Braca