

March 4, 2020

Dear Bellevue School District Learning Community,

We want to start by thanking our families, staff and the Bellevue community for your patience in this rapidly evolving and unsettling time. This message is intended to provide you with an update on COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the impact on our district. We are monitoring the changing circumstances and are relying on guidance and information provided by our county and state public health offices.

Today, Public Health – Seattle & King County announced additional guidance aimed at reducing the risk of exposure and slowing the spread of COVID-19. **Public Health is not recommending closing schools at this time.** Health officials from Public Health and the CDC weighed recommendations for schools very carefully. Here are some of the reasons they recommend schools remain open:

- The available data about COVID-19 cases has shown that children and youth have not been high risk groups for serious illness from this virus. COVID-19 infection in children tends to be more like a common cold or a mild fever.
- Public Health – Seattle & King County knows that schools are doing the important work of educating our children. They don't want to disrupt that unless there are confirmed coronavirus exposure risks.
- Public Health – Seattle & King County also recognizes that school closures have other impacts on working parents. School closures can be disruptive and costly for families, and they consider both the potential benefits and negative consequences of closures when they make recommendations.

**Again, Public Health is not recommending closing schools at this time.** If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19, Public Health will work with the school and the district to determine the best measures including potential school closure. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities.

Public Health – Seattle & King County's [new guidelines](#) also included the following recommendations:

- People at higher risk of severe illness stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions are advised to consult with their healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home. We understand that each family is in a unique situation and must make the decision of whether or not their children will attend school. As a district, we will respect the decision each family makes.

We are reviewing the guidance to evaluate additional impacts on our schools.

### **What We Are Doing**

We are working with our community partners to suspend building use on nights and weekends. We are reviewing other events in our schools to determine how to approach cancellations.

We are currently reviewing large events at our schools and for our school community. If you have concerns about a school-related gathering or event, please contact your school.

We are implementing new cleaning protocols that change the frequency of cleaning high-touch areas in our schools and district facilities, including main office and reception areas, nursing stations, entryway door handles, classroom door handles, classroom counters and desktops, classroom sinks, cafeteria table surfaces, school buses and other building touchpoints.

### **Getting Accurate and Reliable Information**

We continue to advise our community regarding the importance of accurate sources of information. A falsified petition on change.org began circulating in our community regarding COVID-19. A comment on the petition purporting to be Dr. Duran falsely states schools would be closed from March 5 to March 19 and is an illegal impersonation of Dr. Duran. As we stated above, no decisions have been made to close schools at this time. Any decisions and information related to COVID-19 will be shared via official district communication channels. We are committed to updating our community regularly. If there are any decisions made to close schools, we will inform our community immediately via SchoolMessenger, our district website, and our official social media channels.

### **Stay Connected**

Our actions may change as this situation evolves. We are committed to providing you with timely and accurate updates on the best recommendations and guidance from our public health authorities. We will continue to update our website daily.

All updates from the Bellevue School District can be found on our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) page](#). We want to express our appreciation for the patience of our Bellevue community as we work through the daily challenges COVID-19 has presented us.