



Dear Families,

I write today with an update on our current understanding of the health situation for us here at Community, as well as what we are doing going forward. As you are well aware, the situation is fluid, and we will continue to update you as circumstances change or our thinking evolves over the coming days and weeks.

Villa Exposure: We had an extensive discussion with the St. Louis County Public Health Department today and have a much better understanding of COVID-19. The discussion was led by Dr. Amanda Brzozowski, Epidemiology Specialist, Colleen Condren, Change Management Officer, and Keith Street, Health Education staff, all from the St. Louis County Public Health Department. There were a few key takeaways for us. Most importantly, it is their strongly held belief that COVID-19 is spread through extensive close contact (within six feet) with a person who is showing symptoms. That spread is through respiratory droplets (being coughed or sneezed on by a sick person, for instance), not just through being in the same room, or having casual contact.

We also received confirmation that as of this morning there was only one person who has tested positive for COVID-19 in St. Louis County, undoubtedly the young woman who recently

returned from Italy. She has had no direct contact with either Villa students or our students, and because according to the Health Department direct contact with a symptomatic person is required for transmission, we have made the decision to allow younger siblings of Villa students to return to school. We are excited to have our students return to school tomorrow; please take a moment to speak with your children about the importance of welcoming them back. They are not a risk to the community, nor are they in any way at fault for their circumstances, and we would like them to return to as warm a welcome as possible.

I will note that this is an excellent example of the rapidly evolving nature of this crisis. We are basing our policies on the best current scientific understanding of the virus, and if the health department's guidance on this changes, our policy may change as well. As always, the health and safety of our students and employees is our primary concern.

Here at Community School: Community School continues to work to maximize the health and safety of our students and employees. In light of the ongoing health situation, we implemented the following lunchtime procedures today: closure of the self-serve salad bar (students may go to the kitchen to be served salad), reinforced hand washing and personal hygiene procedures in classrooms, extra sterilization of lunch tables throughout the day, and additional lunchtime steps to minimize the potential spread of germs.

Contingency Planning: As you know, we are preparing for the possibility of being required to close. While we do not anticipate this occurring any time soon, we are implementing several steps to be sure to be ready. First, we will be training our teachers this week on the delivery of curriculum at a distance. Additionally, this Thursday we will be sending home with students any materials they might need in the event we do close. When these materials come home, **please be sure to put them in a place you can find them after spring break.** It is likely that we will return to school on March 30, and students will need to bring their materials back to school.

Resources: There are many good resources available both locally and nationally:

- St. Louis County has set up a COVID-19 website at <https://stlouisco.com/Your-Government/County-Executive/COVID-19>
- St. Louis County also has a hotline to call if you feel symptomatic: 314-615-2660

- Good information is always available at the CDC:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Finally, I realize that this situation is filled with uncertainty, and parents and our employees are understandably concerned and fearful. The CDC has good information on managing anxiety in both adults and children at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>. Please remember that how we approach this with the children in our care, and each other, can be just as contagious as the illness itself; the more we can be calm, clear, and factual in our discussions, the more we will reassure our children and friends, and help us all keep our anxiety to as low a level as possible.

Warmly,

Bob