

# DRYDEN

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19

This interim guidance is subject to change based on emerging information.

If you would like to learn more, please check the following site for updates:

[NYSDOH's 2019 Novel \(New\) Coronavirus webpage](#)

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC's\) Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage](#)

[CDC's Frequently Asked Questions and Answers webpage](#)

### Q WHAT IS COVID-19 OR CORONAVIRUS?

**A** There are several known coronaviruses that infect people and usually only cause mild illness, like the common cold. The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is part of this family of viruses. It is being called a “novel” (new) coronavirus because it is a new coronavirus that was not known before this outbreak.

*Preliminary data suggest that older adults and persons with underlying health conditions or compromised immune systems might be at greater risk for severe illness from this virus. In fact, most confirmed cases of COVID-19 have occurred in adults.*

### Q WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19?

**A** It is important, especially as an educational institution, that our reaction to and preparation for COVID-19 be informed, logical, and proportionate to the risk. Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments.

*To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for schools to do now is **plan and prepare**. As the global outbreak evolves, schools want to be ready if COVID-19 does appear in their communities.*

**Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19.** The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and follow up on next steps.

### Q WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19?

**A It is essential that students stay home when they are sick.** Frequently reported signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, muscle pain or fatigue, and shortness of breath at illness onset. Sore throat has also been reported in some patients in the early stages. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

*If you suspect your child is sick, it is essential that he/she/they not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare centers, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed.*

*Parents and caregivers should also teach their children these everyday measures that help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:*

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Use hand sanitizer appropriately. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.

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### **Q HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD(REN) ABOUT COVID-19?**

**A** Remember to first listen to what they've heard and how they're feeling, and then correct potential misinformation (refer to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), [NYS Department of Health](#), and/or [Tompkins County Health Department](#) for accurate and up-to-date information). You can also review preventative measures such as those listed above.

*Families may also appreciate visual resources, like this child-friendly comic from National Public Radio: <https://n.pr/2uKYU16>.*

### **Q WHAT IS THE DRYDEN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (DCSD) DOING TO PREPARE FOR COVID-19?**

**A** We are planning and preparing, as per guidance from federal, state, and local authorities. Specifically, the DCSD is:

- communicating often with employees and community members;
- revising and implementing our Pandemic Plan as it becomes necessary;
- staying in close communication with the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) and other educational institutions;
- monitoring and planning for student and staff absences;
- continuing our current procedures for students and staff who are sick at school (schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19);
- continuing our cleaning protocols, and reminding staff of these protocols; and
- encouraging students and staff to wash their hands, to utilize hand sanitizer when unable to wash their hands, and to practice good cough and sneeze hygiene habits.

### **Q CAN SCHOOLS RELEASE THE NAMES OF STUDENTS EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF COVID-19 TO LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH?**

**A** In an emergency, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) authorizes school officials to disclose education records, without consent, to appropriate parties in connection to the emergency, if knowledge of that information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals. See [34 CFR Part 99](#).

### **Q WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WHO ARE QUARANTINED BY THE TOMPKINS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT?**

**A** Throughout the Dryden community, and within the DCSD, the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) has asked folks to quarantine themselves. The TCHD communicates with the DCSD regarding who these students are, and we maintain all confidentiality. Students and families who are quarantined are asked to restrict their movements and travel based on their potential exposures and are monitored for a period of 14 days.

It is important to note the difference between quarantine and isolation. Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. Isolation is used to separate ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy. Students who are quarantined receive work and support remotely and their absences are considered "excused." In the DCSD, we believe it is vital to maintain social support for students and families who are quarantined and will continue to do this.

### **Q WHO CAN CLOSE SCHOOLS?**

**A** The decision to close schools rests in the first instance with the local board of education or superintendent of schools, in consultation with local health authorities.

*Schools will be required to follow requests of the local health department and county emergency managers, as well as any emergency declarations issued by the Governor.*

*The NYS Commissioner of Education also has the authority to close schools under extraordinary circumstances, in which local school officials do not take action deemed appropriate by State and/or county emergency personnel in accordance with county or State emergency preparedness plans or directives.*

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### **Q IF WARRANTED, HOW WILL SCHOOLS HANDLE AN EXTENDED CLOSURE?**

**A** The DCSD will continue to collaborate with local and state authorities, including the Tompkins County Health Department, to determine when and if a closure is necessary. We will also utilize any guidance from the New York State Education Department. In the event that we are required to engage in remote learning due to school closure, the DCSD has initial, yet comprehensive plans to support the continuity of teaching and learning, which we are developing in consultation with national/international organizations, such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and Consortium for School Networking (CoSN).

### **Q HOW WOULD NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS BE AFFECTED BY DECISIONS TO CLOSE?**

**A** Just like public schools, private schools are subject to any declaration by the Governor and any request to close by health departments and local emergency managers.

### **Q ARE ADDITIONAL CLEANING PROTOCOLS BEING INSTITUTED IN SCHOOLS?**

**A** Governor Cuomo recently indicated that the State will be providing new cleaning protocols for schools to contain any potential spread of COVID-19. In the meantime, the DCSD is reminding staff to take extra care with our current cleaning procedures, including wiping down door handles and surfaces, as well as taking stock of hand sanitizer mounted stations and desktop pumps in schools.

*UPDATE: On March 4th, our district received Interim Cleaning and Disinfection Guidance for Primary and Secondary Schools for COVID-19 from the New York Department of Health. Per the guidance, schools should continue performing routine cleaning. Specific high-risk locations warrant cleaning and disinfection at least daily, including the lunchroom, health office, and high contact surfaces, such as light switches, handrails, and doorknobs or handles.*

*If an individual with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 was symptomatic in a school-setting, cleaning and disinfection would occur throughout the school.*

*The cleaning protocols have been shared with our custodial staff and will be implemented immediately.*

### **SOURCES CONSULTED:**

New York State Department of Health  
New York State Department of Education

Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention

Teaching Tolerance  
ChangeLab