



Ms. Eileen F. Shafer
Superintendent of Schools

March 4, 2020

Dear Families and Staff,

Since news was first reported in December about the outbreak of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in Wuhan, China, the virus has spread to parts of the United States. Understandably, we all have concerns about guarding against infection, as well as preparing for the possibility of the virus spreading to our community.

Protecting against COVID-19 begins with each one of us taking the proper precautions. That is why I urge everyone to follow the district's Department of Medical and Nursing Services' recommendations, which are:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Singing "Happy Birthday to You" two times takes about 20 seconds.) If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and then wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Be mindful that handshaking, cheek-kisses, and even fist-bumping may not be welcome gestures. Consider elbow-bumping as a greeting.

The Facilities Department will ensure that our custodial service is cleaning and disinfecting touch points on a nightly basis, including, but not limited, to door doorknobs, horizontal surfaces, handrails, and lavatory fixtures and accessories.

Last week, I directed Deputy Superintendent Susana Perón to convene a Task Force on COVID-19 Preparedness. She is currently assembling the task force. The purpose of the task force is twofold. First, it will formulate plans for gathering and disseminating the most credible information about the virus and the best ways to guard against it. Second, it will develop strategies for maintaining instruction and services in the event that students and staff are not able to enter one or several school buildings due to the spread of the virus.

In an effort to provide easier access to COVID-19 information, a page has been built on the district's website, paterson.k12.nj.us. Look for the "COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)" link in the Quick Links section on the left side of the homepage. The webpage has the following resources:

- Links to the webpages of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Jersey State Department of Health.

- Posters that encourage handwashing that can be printed out and displayed in homes, houses of worship, places of business, and other common areas
- Videos that educate and encourage proper handwashing practices to best guard against the virus.

Additional resources and updates will be added as needed.

In the event that we need to reach staff, students and families urgently, we will use robocalls, emails, social media posts, and the local media as necessary.

I want all staff, students and families to know that the Paterson Public School District is maintaining vigilance in every development in matters concerning COVID-19. We all know that the news that we see every day can be unsettling. But we also know that if we all faithfully keep to taking precautions, if we stay focused on credible information, and if we follow the plans and protocols that will be developed soon, then we all stand the best chances of avoiding risk to our schools and community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eileen F. Shafer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Eileen F. Shafer, M.Ed.

Superintendent of Schools