Dear Muskie Family/Staff Member,

As you know, there has been increasing attention and media coverage regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. I want to assure you that the Muscatine Community School District is keeping track of this situation through proven and trustworthy sources: our local health department, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IPDH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE: there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iowa and Iowa is currently considered a low-risk state.**

Updated information from the CDC on COVID-19 in the United States can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.>

Much is being learned about this newly emerged virus. Based on the current information, health officials are recommending local communities and schools should take the same steps to protect against COVID-19 as we take to prevent the spread of everyday illnesses like the common cold or the flu:

* Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
* 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 mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

COVID-19 is believed to be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, much in the way the flu and other respiratory viruses are spread. Symptoms can be fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. At this time, persons considered at risk are those with travel to [locations](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) indicated by the CDC or those in close contact with persons infected with COVID-19.

Students, families, and staff who may be traveling over spring break should monitor their traveling [location](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) via the CDC to determine if traveling is a risk to your family. The school district will follow the CDC’s and IDPH’s recommendations for quarantining students and staff on return from countries that the CDC has identified as travel restricted locations.

It is also important to note the following:

* The district uses hospital-grade disinfectants to disinfect commonly touched surfaces in all district buildings with focused efforts, especially during flu season. We will be continuing these focused efforts as we monitor COVID-19.

While a new type of illness can be scary, we can protect our students, staff, and the broader community by using simple everyday actions that protect people from other types of respiratory viruses. Our teachers, school nurses, and staff are working carefully to encourage these simple and effective habits of frequent hand washing, covering every cough or sneeze, and cleaning classroom tables/surfaces frequently. This is important not just to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, but to help prevent the spread of other infections that can lead to student illness and absences.

Thank you for your support of our district, our schools, our students and our teachers and staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jerry Riibe

Superintendent of Schools