As the number of COVID-19 cases in the United States and other countries continues to rise, we want to assure families and staff that our district is following this dynamic situation closely. The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority. We remain in frequent contact with Linn County Public Health and continue to report daily illness-related absences to that agency.

As of today, there are no cases of COVID-19 in Iowa and the CDC and Public Health recommendations for preventing the spread of COVID (and all illnesses) in schools remain the same: **frequent handwashing, covering coughs/sneezes, and staying home when ill.**

You play a very important role in helping to prevent the spread of viruses. These steps may sound simple but, according to the public health experts, they are tried-and-true measures for all of us to take:

1. If you are sick, do not come to school: that includes staff, students, parents and volunteers.
2. Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds before eating and after touching community surfaces. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer.
3. Refrain from touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
4. Cover your cough with the inside of your elbow, not your hands.
5. Avoid close contact with anyone who has flu-like symptoms.

We know many families will be traveling for spring break. As of today, there are no recommendations or precautions for US travel and no monitoring or screening is being required/recommended by the CDC. There are travel alerts for China, Japan, Italy, South Korea and Iran and those travel guidelines can be found on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

**ABOUT COVID-19:**The coronavirus is spread by droplets, up to 6 feet away, but it is not a hardy virus. It does not last long on surfaces and is easily killed with regular cleaning products like Clorox wipes. No special cleaning products are required. Routine cleaning of high touch surfaces should be targeted as is done for influenza.

* **IF** a case of the virus is confirmed in Iowa, they will not release the location of the person infected. **If** a student/staff member in our school district is diagnosed, we would be notified by IDPH and LCPH and they would direct the response.
* **IF** cases of the virus would rise to the level of "widespread community activity" in Iowa, LCPH would offer recommendations at that time about when/if schools should close for 14 days.
  + Plans will be developed to offer continuity of education to students via E learning.
  + Well staff will be allowed to attend work to deliver the E learning.

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS:**

* Influenza continues to be a higher level of immediate concern in our community because it is widespread in Iowa and across the world. The symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 are the same and the prevention recommendations are the same: frequent handwashing, covering coughs/sneezes, and staying home when ill.
* Our current student illness exclusion procedures are in line with CDC/LCPH school recommendations. Students with a fever of 100.4 or higher are sent home and should remain home for 24 hours until fever free without fever reducing medication. Students without a fever, who exhibit significant symptoms of illness, are also sent home.

We understand the COVID-19 outbreak has caused concern and worry and we want to help alleviate fears by keeping families and staff informed about our continued efforts to promote health and safety for all. For more information regarding COVID-19, please visit these websites or call Linn County Public Health at 319-892-6000: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>.