



TAKE ROOT. GROW. BLOOM.

Oh, and don't forget this important message.



Dear MSD Families,

We are less than two weeks from Spring Break, and the question on everyone's mind is, "What is going to happen with the Coronavirus?" To a large extent, no one can answer that question with certainty. We know that as of this writing, there are five cases in Denver County, 17 in the State of Colorado, and 938 in the United States. We also know that those numbers will increase, but to what extent and at what rate we cannot be sure, so we are taking prudent actions at MSD to prepare for all possibilities. I'm writing today to share more of our response plans, including around Spring Break travel, and offer resources to help you answer your child's questions. This is a longer email than I typically like to send but it includes information that is important to cover.

Current Work

First, we are considering each community event with care and prudence, making the best possible decision for each. We have decided to cancel tonight's "Build a Wine Cellar" Auction Party, but as of now, Friday's PA & Parent Coffee, "Inclusive Parenting" will go on as planned (please [RSVP](#)). We will continue to evaluate events on a daily basis, including field trips and the Auction next month.

As you know, we have taken steps to further improve good hygiene practices at school. Students wash their hands when they arrive at school and are reminded to keep washing their hands throughout the day, using warm water and soap. We have increased the use of disinfectant so that in addition to nightly cleaning, we are also cleaning more regularly throughout the school day. We have stopped handshake greetings and food preparation work, put a halt on field trips and outside visitors as much as possible, and are adhering to keeping symptomatic children at home. These hygiene practices are the first line of defense against spreading the virus, and I thank you for your support on these actions.

Important note: Going forward you do not need to get a Doctor's note to return to school unless your child has a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. We ask you to please call and talk with your Doctor's office about your child's symptoms and if they are ready to return to school. We also ask that you confirm this conversation occurred in an email to [Donté](#).

Over the weekend, we made the hard decision to cancel the scheduled travel of 11 of our Faculty members (many of whom were presenting!), to the American Montessori Society (AMS) Conference starting this Thursday in Dallas, due to exposure concerns. For these decisions and others, we are consulting the Colorado State Department of Public Health and Environment's website regarding the Coronavirus, which you can find [here](#).

Possible School Closure and Attendance

Second, I want to clarify the circumstances that would cause us to ask students or adults to refrain from coming to school, those that would cause us to consider closing the school for a day or two of cleaning, and those that might lead us to close school for a protracted period of time during which we would support home learning as much as possible.

For clarity, it is worth defining some terms:

- A person in direct contact with someone who has tested positively for Coronavirus - or who is diagnosed with it shortly after - is considered a **Primary contact**.
- Anyone who came in contact with a Primary contact would be considered a **Secondary contact**.
- Anyone who came in contact with that person might be considered a **Tertiary contact**.

If we learn that anyone designated a **primary contact** has been in the school, we will close for at least 24-hours to do a deep disinfecting of campus - as has been done at other independent schools in the area. The person designated a **primary contact** would be asked not to come to school for at least 14 days from their contact with the person diagnosed with the virus.

If someone in the school has contact with a **primary**, becoming a **secondary contact**, we ask that person to refrain from coming to school for 14 days following the contact with the **primary**.

If someone is **tertiary** and chooses to stay home, we will not object. Employees will retain pay and benefits; students will have excused absences.

Another area of our focus is **Spring Break** travel. If your family travels to a country that the CDC classifies as Level 2 or 3 (for example, Italy is level 3 and Japan is Level 2), please do not send your child(ren) to school for 14 days after returning to Denver. If after your return, a country or location you visit is newly designated as Level 2 or 3, we will ask your child(ren) to refrain from coming to school for 14 days after your return. If for any reason you will be self-quarantining, please contact your appropriate Education Level Director ([Rachel](#), [Anne](#), or [Carrie](#)) to let them know. [Here](#) is the link to the CDC page classifying countries by level.

We are also prepared for a scenario in which schools are required to be closed for a protracted period of time due to government mandate if someone who has been in school tests positive for the virus, or if the number of students or faculty members who are in self-quarantine affects our critical mass to hold school. In all of these cases, we would support some age-appropriate levels of home learning.

In the event of a protracted closure, teachers have been diligently working on curriculum plans for remote learning. We are working with families in the upper grades to ensure laptop access and are ensuring those laptops have Zoom loaded for video conferencing. We intend to use a combination of Blackbaud classroom pages and Zoom video conferencing to facilitate remote learning. While our Montessori curriculum relies heavily on our hands-on, material rich classroom environments, we are working hard to ensure our students can continue their studies from home in an age-appropriate way with the remote support of their teachers.

We have created a Resource Page in Blackbaud specific to Coronavirus. There are good resources as well as archived communications from me. We are mindful that the nature of the virus and the uncertainty about its potential spread may be a source of anxiety for you and our students. The National Association of School Psychologists has collected some [good advice](#) on how parents might discuss the virus with their children. This article, [Coronavirus, Wildfires, Oh My: What to Say to a Child Who's Scared By the News](#) is a good one too. Our own Student Support and Wellness Team is available to help support our classroom communities as needed. We know as Montessori educators that children do best and feel most secure with predictable routines which we will try and stick to, to the fullest extent as is safely possible, and while we have plans for every scenario, I hope that we can proceed with school as usual.

Thank you all for your empathy and care for each other as we navigate this challenge together. My (well-washed) fingers are firmly crossed that most of our preparations will be unnecessary, but we are prepared.

Warmly,
Julie

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