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Dothan City Schools mission is to prepare all students for the choices and challenges of the 21st Century (the future). Our goal is to prepare all students to participate productively and responsibly in a rapidly changing society.

February 28, 2020

Dear Administrators, Teachers, Staff and Parents:

As coverage of the Coronavirus outbreak in China, other international locations and subsequent positive cases in the United States continues, our school system is fielding an increasing number of questions from anxious parents and residents. Please know that, as we do in all health-related cases, we are working closely together and receiving additional guidance from the Houston County Health Department, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama State Department of Education, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is also important to understand that as of this writing, **we have no confirmed cases of Coronavirus in Houston County or in Alabama.** However, this is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation, and one which we are monitoring closely. We are encouraging our schools to plan proactively. The best way to address anxiety and stress is to stay informed.

What you need to know

Coronavirus spreads like other respiratory illness such as the flu and common cold, primarily through coughing or sneezing by those who already have symptoms. There have also been rare reports of spread from an infected person with no symptoms to a close contact.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends any individuals who have returned from China within the last 3 weeks that are feeling ill with symptoms of a **fever and/or cough or difficulty breathing**, to please contact your health care provider and notify the Houston County Health Department at 334-678-2800 for further guidance.

As a system, we have issued prevention reminders to school administrators on what they can do to help ensure a healthy school environment. Since children aren't always as vigilant as adults about healthcare precautions, we want to be sure we enlist your partnership in encouraging their health habits. Practicing good hygiene can help to limit the spread of viruses in our schools. The virus may live on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs, so as a safeguard; custodial staff will continue to regularly clean classrooms and common areas.

Since this is the height of cold and flu season, we encourage all students, parents, and staff to take common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases.

- Encourage students and staff to stay home when they are sick.
 - Those who have a fever at school should go home and stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
 - Separate sick students and staff from others, ideally in a separate place, until they can be picked up to go home.
- Promote hand hygiene among students and staff through education, scheduled time for hand washing, and availability of soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Teach and encourage proper cough etiquette—cough or sneeze into a tissue, sleeve, or arm (do not use hands).
- Perform routine surface cleaning.
- Be vigilant when attending large gatherings, as this is where respiratory viruses often spread. If you are not feeling well or are experiencing cold, flu, or other symptoms, stay home to avoid spreading germs.
- Flu vaccine. It is not too late.

We will be continuing our partnerships with public health experts and updating you when new relevant information is available.

Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,

Doretha James RN

Doretha James, RN
District Lead Nurse