



March 2, 2020

This past week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) notified schools and businesses of the need to make plans in the event of a national outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Since this time, Emerson administrators and trustees have been working collaboratively to address this concern and to develop proactive plans in the event that COVID-19 impacts school operations in the future. This note is an update of what we know about COVID-19, what we are doing at Emerson currently, and how we are preparing for a potential impact on our students and school. At the close of this note are resources which you may find helpful to review regarding COVID-19.

What do we know?

COVID-19, a virus in the general family of coronaviruses, is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients exhibit such symptoms as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. As of February 29, over 85,000 cases were reported, 92% of which were in mainland China. There have been over 2,900 deaths, with the elderly and immunocompromised at greatest risk. There have been over 70 confirmed and presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 identified in the United States in seven states, including Illinois and Wisconsin. As of February 29, no cases had been confirmed in Washtenaw County or in Michigan.

What are we currently doing at Emerson?

As in all matters, we need to keep the needs of the students first. The most important recommendation from health officials is for students and adults alike to engage in healthy practices. These include the following:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay home when you are sick
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover coughs and sneezes with either a tissue or upper sleeve

In order to help reinforce these practices, we will be devoting additional classroom time for our teachers and our Medical Assistant to work with our students on understanding and following these procedures.

Additionally, we are staying in close contact with state and local health officials, so that we may best be alerted to any changes required of our practices. For example, at present, the CDC does not recommend any changes to our routine environmental cleaning with standard cleaning products, but should a new protocol be advised, we will take appropriate action.

Finally, our teachers will be continuing to answer questions from our students that might arise regarding the origin of COVID-19. We want to be sure that they feel safe, and that they know that the adults in their lives are caring for them. As part of this, we will also be sure to appropriately respond to questions as they might arise regarding the virus' origin in China. As one of our Lower School teachers reminded our students, this is a human virus that happened

to originate in China, not a “Chinese virus”. We want to be sure that fears do not translate into biases or result in negative behaviors regarding anyone’s race, ethnicity, or country of origin.

How are we preparing for the future?

As per the CDC’s notification, we are looking at how a more widespread outbreak might affect Emerson. First, we need to consider what level of student absence might trigger a need for us to close school, assuming that we are not under any state or federal advisory to do so.

Additionally, we are considering how a temporary interruption of normal school operations would affect upcoming trips, including class trips and teacher-led trips. We are also exploring what the most effective means of providing instruction for our students would be in the event of a temporary closure. This may include remote learning, extension of the school day, and/or extension of the school year. Much will depend upon the anticipated length and timing of a required closure.

Regardless of future plans, our teachers, administrators, and trustees will be working on developing plans which make the most sense for our students. As we consider potential plans, we will be communicating with you frequently and directly, so that you may be kept fully in the loop. You can expect more updates from us in the days and weeks to come.

Information sources

The following websites provide helpful information regarding COVID-19:

- Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 information page - [link](#)
- Washtenaw County Health Department - [link](#)

I thank you for your confidence in Emerson School to care for your child and provide the best environment in the face of such global concerns.

John Huber
Head of School