



BIGFORK PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 38

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Home of the
VIKES
and
VALS

March 5, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In response to the national health concern regarding the coronavirus, we are sharing the following information to assist in keeping our homes, schools, and community safe and healthy environments.

COVID-19 is a newly discovered coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This virus can cause respiratory symptoms ranging from the common cold to severe pneumonia. Cases have now been identified in Washington State, Oregon, California, Arizona, Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida, however, there are no confirmed cases in Montana. Persons at greatest risk are the elderly and those with existing health issues.

This virus spreads from person to person and is thought to mostly do this via respiratory droplets when coughing. The common symptoms include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

To reduce transmission of airborne illnesses including COVID-19, the CDC recommends individuals and families follow everyday preventive measures:

- Voluntary Home Isolation: Stay home when you are sick with respiratory disease symptoms. At the present time, these symptoms are more likely due to influenza or other respiratory viruses than to COVID-19-related virus.
- Respiratory Etiquette: Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then throw it in the trash can.
- Hand Hygiene: Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol.
- Environmental Health Action: Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Routine use of these measures by individuals and their families will increase community resilience and readiness for responding to an outbreak. For more information from the Center for Disease Control, please click on the following links:

[What you need to know about the Coronavirus.](#)

[What to do if you suspect you may be infected with the Coronavirus.](#)

[Some good reminders on germ management.](#)


While a new type of illness can be scary, we can protect our students, teachers, and the broader community by using these 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 handwashing, covering every cough or sneeze, and cleaning classroom tables/surfaces frequently. This is important not just to help prevent the spread of coronavirus but to also help prevent the spread of other infections that can lead to staff and student illnesses and absences.

Some specific steps Bigfork Schools have taken to address concerns are:

- A high school student trip planned this spring break to Europe is being closely reviewed and a final decision will be forth coming soon.
- Cleaning schools on a regular basis with added precautions to disinfect hard surfaces and areas that have high use.
- Working closely with other schools in the valley, along with our Flathead County/City Health Department, to determine best practices and possible conditions that could impact school schedules.
[Click here for an informational letter from the Flathead County/City Health Department.](#)
- Their website can be accessed at <https://flatheadhealth.org/>
- Staying in close contact with the Office of Public Instruction and the State of Montana DPHHS. State information can be found at:
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>
[Click here to watch a press conference conducted 3/3/20, by the Governor's office.](#)
- Staying current on breaking news coming from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) directed at schools. You can find additional information at <https://www.cdc.gov>.
- Preparing to offer virtual learning opportunities for 5th-12th grade students in the event of extended school closures are recommended by heath officials.

As more information becomes available, we will keep information on our website up to date.

Thanks,



Matt Jensen
Superintendent
Bigfork Schools