March 6, 2020

Dear Baltimore County Public Schools Families,

Team BCPS has been working closely with the Baltimore County Department of Health (BCDH) to ensure that we are prepared to prevent, and if necessary, respond in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 disease in our community. We are coordinating with federal, state and local public health and safety partners to take public health actions, as necessary, to keep the community safe. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, BCPS will continue to work to implement public health recommendations and share updated information with the community, as it becomes available.

I would like to highlight the steps that we have taken to protect students and staff:

- **Daily briefings:** I have met with physicians from the Baltimore County Department of Health, as well as with key staff from the Division of School Climate and Safety. Updates are received on an ongoing basis so that key Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) staff members are abreast of current information and protocol, allowing for a proactive and thorough systemic response.

- **Ongoing communication with staff from the Baltimore County Department of Health:** Staff from the Office of Health Services receive daily updates (in addition to as needed information) on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Maryland Department of Health about our COVID-19 response and plan.

- **Regular updates to school nurses:** Staff from the Office of Health Services e-mail school nurses about recommended practices (such as reinforcing handwashing) as well as any changes in protocols and procedures.

- **Review and reinforcement of school cleaning:** Operations staff, as well as staff from the Department of Transportation, have been reminded of the importance of adherence to cleaning and disinfection protocols and the need for frequent checks and restocking of handwashing supplies, e.g., soap and paper towels. In addition, staff have verified that BCPS is using recommended products and has a sufficient supply on hand.

- **Establishment of a COVID-19 Task Force:** A task force, including representation from across the organization, as well as from the Baltimore County Department of Health, has been convened and will meet regularly to coordinate a timely and thorough response.

- **Enhanced communication with school community:** An overview of the systemic response is posted on a dedicated page on our Web site and is available in multiple languages. The Web site will be updated on an ongoing basis to include tips and resources.

*Raising the bar, Closing gaps, Preparing for our future*
Once again, I want to assure you that staff from the Office of Health Services remain in close communication with the Baltimore County Department of Health, and routinely monitor guidelines received from the CDC and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). I would ask, as a best practice for overall health, that we all engage in everyday, preemptive measures to prevent the spread of germs, including:

- **Reinforcing handwashing:** Be a good handwashing role model. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to partner with their child’s school staff to model, educate, and remind students about handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Details on [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#) are available for your perusal, as well as [Handwashing Tips for Families](#).

- **Practice good hygiene:** Model best practices for coughing or sneezing. To help stop the spread of germs, the CDC recommends covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. Wash your hands with soap and water after each cough or sneeze. A video on proper [Cough and Sneeze Hygiene](#), is available that demonstrates best practices for coughing and sneezing hygiene.

- **Keep sick children home from school:** If your child has symptoms of illness, check his/her temperature (be sure to have a working thermometer in your house). If your child has a fever of 100°F or higher, they should be kept home until the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine (like Tylenol). If you haven’t already done so, work with your friends and family to come up with a plan for someone to be with your child when he/she is sick and unable to attend school.

- **And don’t forget about you:** One final practice that helps prevent the spread of respiratory disease is avoiding close contact with people who are sick. If you are ill, you should try to distance yourself from others, so you do not spread your germs. Distancing includes staying home from work when possible.

At the time that this letter was distributed, the Maryland Department of Health has confirmed three cases of COVID-19 in the State of Maryland. At this point in time, we are focused on prevention; however, we are being proactive in planning should the need arise to close Baltimore County public schools and facilities due to an outbreak. In the event that schools would need to be closed, we are prepared to utilize our Web site and Schoology to provide instruction to our students. We would continue to use the BCPS Web site to provide updates regarding school activities, safety information, and expectations as far as the reconvening of school.
School administrators and teachers are cognizant of the need to be flexible with students for making up missed work after an absence due to illness. We want to make it as easy as possible for families to make the decision to keep students’ home from school if they are sick. If you have concerns regarding missed schoolwork due to illness, please contact your child’s guidance counselor - they will help work to create a plan with teachers.

Staff from the Office of Health Services remain available to address any questions and concerns you might have regarding the COVID-19. Nurses can be reached between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. daily, at 443-809-6368. Additional information on the coronavirus is available at:

Baltimore County Department of Health  
Maryland Department of Health  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Sincerely,

Darryl L. Williams, Ed. D.  
Superintendent