

### **Wednesday, March 11, 2020: Coronavirus Update 3 - School Closed Thursday and Friday**

Princeton Charter School Families,

I hope this email finds you and your family well at this challenging time.

Out of an abundance of caution and consideration for our students, families, and staff, we made the decision to close today and to remain closed for the rest of this week, **Thursday 3/12 and Friday 3/13.**

After consultations with the Princeton Health Officer based on information that emerged last night. Here are the salient facts:

- A 5-8 division staff member attended a gathering on Feb 29.
- Two individuals who were at the gathering tested positive for COVID-19 after the gathering; they did not appear to be symptomatic at the event. One of these two individuals was at the Biogen conference in Boston.
- Two additional individuals who were at the same gathering have reported that they have also tested positive. The fact that they caught the coronavirus at the gathering represents community transmission, i.e. it has been transferred from one person to another at the party.
- Our staff member continues to remain asymptomatic.
- As a result of having no symptoms, it is not likely that our staff member will be tested. The individual requested to be tested, but as of now that request has been denied. Rather, we will have to wait out the 14 days to rule out any possible contamination.
- We are all concerned about the possible spread and health implications for the entire Charter Family, which remains our paramount consideration.
- Note the staff member was not at the Gala.

When I spoke with the Princeton Health Officer, Jeff Grosser, earlier yesterday, the facts were that our employee was asymptomatic, that there was no evidence of community spread, and that the initial two individuals were reportedly asymptomatic at the time of the gathering.

However, that changed last night when we learned of the additional two individuals who were infected at the gathering, and this was the key factor in my decision to close.

We will be notifying all families and staff who were in the classroom with the staff member in question taking care to not reveal the staff member's identity. If you are not notified, then your child was not in close contact; however, as per earlier message, this person *was* in the 5-8 building, *not* in K-4, Marsee nor the campus center.

We are treating today, Thursday, and Friday, as remote learning days in order to provide learning continuity, activities for the children at home, and to count towards the 180 day attendance requirement.

The timing is a challenge. In anticipation of being a possible closure, we were planning to meet with faculty on Friday to plan instructional strategies. Teachers will be providing learning activities for today, Thursday, and Friday to the best of their ability on short notice and from remote locations, i.e. not their classrooms where materials and plans may still be. Assignments will be provided via email or PowerSchool. Generally speaking grades K-2 will provide assignments via email and grades 3-8 will largely be via PowerSchool. If you do not see an assignment for a subject on PowerSchool or cannot access PowerSchool, kindly please reach out to the teacher directly via email, and please note that assignments will be posted throughout the day.

Based on my discussion with the Health Officer, unfortunately, we will be postponing the school play.

In closing, **we will be closed Thursday 3/12 and Friday 3/13** as a precautionary measure until we are certain that the staff member is not symptomatic for at least 14 days. (Monday will be the 16th day.) This will rule out infection given the absence of a test. I had mentioned in a previous email that we would potentially be closed for two weeks. That timing does not apply in this current situation since ***we do not have any current transmission within our community.*** We have the potential risk of transmission. Once that is ruled out, we will be able to resume classes.

Assignments will be forthcoming during this time period. Pertinent information will be provided as it becomes available to us. We appreciate your patience and support.

In the meantime, please do your best to stay healthy. Continue the best practices of washing hands often, sneezing into tissues or the elbow, and keep hands (fingers) away from eyes, nose, and mouth.

The CDC also provides some good guidance about how to talk to children about the coronavirus: [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children](#):

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk.
- Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- Avoid language that might blame others and lead to [stigma](#).
- Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online.
- Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Provide information that is honest and accurate.

- Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.
- Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.

Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.

- Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick.
- Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help protect children and school staff. (e.g., increased handwashing, cancellation of events or activities)
- Get children into a handwashing habit.
  - Teach them to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
  - If soap and water are not available, teach them to use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.

Sincerely,  
Larry