

THE PARK SCHOOL *of* BALTIMORE

COVID-19 Response — Follow-Up Regarding Community Member

Park Community —

I write with an update regarding our fellow community member who had been exhibiting symptoms that may have suggested exposure to COVID-19.

I have spoken directly with the person's physician — a highly regarded doctor affiliated with Johns Hopkins — and I can share his clinical judgment that this individual is low-risk for COVID-19.

I am happy to tell you, too, that our community member is feeling much better today.

The COVID-19 testing landscape is evolving. In just the last two days, the protocols for testing for COVID-19 have changed — now shifting the responsibility from the Baltimore County Health Department to the discretion of individual practitioners and the Maryland State Department of Health. In light of the new protocols, newly increased test availability, and the news, yesterday, of growing concern of community spread of the virus in the state, the Park community member's physician is able to move forward with a COVID-19 test today. He has also ordered testing for strep and the flu.

Please note that securing results for the COVID-19 test could take several days under current circumstances. And, ultimately, sharing any diagnosis is at the discretion of the patient. We will pass on relevant information that is helpful to our community.

I have received many requests to provide more information about the identity of the individual in question. I appreciate that these inquiries are coming from a place of concern, trying to assess how likely close contact with our community member may have been. I want to emphasize that we are respecting the individual's important right to privacy *and* we are being mindful that we should not provide any information that could be potentially misleading. Given our setting, there is simply no way to speak with any real degree of certainty that individuals would or would not have been in close proximity, or would or would not encounter transmission of a virus from a surface.

Regardless of our knowledge that this is a low-risk case, and without the final outcome of any testing, I want to bring to your attention to yesterday's news that there is now a case of community transmission in the state. I strongly encourage all community members to practice social distancing, and, to the greatest extent possible, to limit interaction with those in high risk groups.

I want to emphasize that during our break and throughout any closure, all of us — students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators — have a responsibility. Health officials have made it clear that taking steps like closing schools will not be effective unless they are accompanied by social distancing strategies. We ask that you restrict social interactions during this period. If our students are out and about, spending time with various friend groups, the virus is more likely to continue its spread.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert at the National Institutes of Health, talks about "flattening the curve" of the virus outbreak. We need to do our part to flatten the curve. We can help do this by adhering to social distancing strategies, as trying and difficult as they may be.

Today's message provides some greater context for our decision to close campus yesterday, and perhaps allays some concerns about the situation specific to Park.

Given the fact that the Governor has chosen to close all public schools for the next two weeks, I can share with you now that campus will remain closed through March 27. I will be back in touch with you over the break to share plans for how school will resume operation, specifically addressing what those initial days (March 25-27) will look like for our students. We will likely use those first days for planning time with our faculty, and I will be confirming plans to implement distance learning for our students at a later time.

As I'm sure you can all appreciate, our faculty and staff — who have been working with extraordinary energy and commitment to prepare for the possibility of distance learning — have their own families and their own needs for a real break in the coming week and a half. I want us all to honor their well-deserved break time, and allow them to refresh and restore themselves without having to think about the complexities of distance learning. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with them regarding your own family's situations, but limit communications to what is urgent until the break is over.

Take good care of yourselves and your families. Stay informed through reliable sources. Follow the best practices for helping to limit the spread of viruses.

I will stay in touch.

—Dan

Please send questions or concerns to covidresponseteam@parkschool.net. Our response team continues to check this account regularly.