

March 3, 2020

Bend-La Pine Schools community,

We are continuing to monitor the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, in Oregon and around the world. As I shared on Friday, we have activated our Pandemic Plan, which provides a plan for our school response if and when the situation changes in Oregon or here at home. While it's encouraged to be prepared, public officials reiterate that there are currently no cases of COVID-19 in Central Oregon at this time.

I want to share answers to a few questions that I have received in the last few days and share with you some new resources that we are rolling out here at Bend-La Pine Schools to keep you updated.

Q: How can I find out more information about COVID-19 or coronavirus?

Most questions can be answered by calling 211, which is a statewide bilingual information phone line that is staffed by knowledgeable individuals.

Q: What do I do if my child is sick?

If your child has fever, cough, shortness of breath you should:

- Have your child stay home, and
- Contact your local health department or health care provider.

They will help you decide if you need an appointment. It's important that people with symptoms stay home. It's one of the most effective ways to minimize exposure.

Teach your child to regularly practice good hygiene measures, such as:

- [Handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and
- [Coughing and sneezing etiquette.](#)

Clean and disinfect often touched objects and surfaces. You can use a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Q: I feel a little feverish, can I still visit today?

We ask that visitors and volunteers who are ill do not visit our schools. If you appear to have signs of influenza when arriving at our schools, we will kindly ask that you return home.

Q: How will school closure decisions be made?

We are continuing to monitor [guidance from the Oregon Department of Education](#) regarding school closures and potential changes to our schedules.

Q: How much notice will we be given if schools close?

If we find ourselves with a need to close a school out of an abundance of caution, we will give families as much notice as possible.

We do encourage families to take time now to plan for childcare in the case of a school closure.

Q: Have practices changed for school visitors and volunteers?

Yes. We are asking all visitors and volunteers to wash their hands when they arrive and depart our schools. Thank you for following the signage to the nearest adult bathroom to wash your hands before entering our school hallways and classrooms.

Q: What are schools doing to keep classrooms clean?

Our custodians are spending additional time each day sanitizing high touch areas in your schools each day. Every classroom and office space have access to a microfiber cloth and sanitizer spray, which staff members are encouraged to be using on high touch areas at the start and end of each day.

Q: Why are we encouraging handwashing vs. sanitizing?

The Centers for Disease Control continues to stress the importance of hand washing. Wash your 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.

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Hand washing instructions: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Hand washing videos: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/videos.html>

Q: What should I tell my child about the virus — if anything?

Families can check out the tools available at [SAMHSA Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)

Q: Where can I get more information?

We have developed a webpage that will house our [FAQs](#), communications and links to COVID-19 information from subject matter experts including the Centers for Disease Control and Oregon Health Authority on our own webpage at www.bend.k12.or.us/COVID-19.

And, in an effort to streamline questions that you may have about COVID-19, we are setting up a dedicated email address: askbls@bend.k12.or.us. We welcome your questions and will get them to the right folks for the answers you seek.

You will also find information coming out daily from local health officials, healthcare partners, schools, cities, law enforcement, and others from the COVID-19 Joint Information Center. You can find this and more at www.coemergencyinfo.blogspot.com.

I, or a member of my team, will send future updates to all families as appropriate. I encourage you to check out www.bend.k12.or.us/COVID-19 for general updates.

Thank you to our families for all that you do every day to support our students and schools. We appreciate your continued support during the next few weeks as we navigate this emerging issue.

Best,

Shay Mikalson

Superintendent
Bend-La Pine Schools