



March 2, 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing today to provide you with updated information regarding Portsmouth Abbey School's response to the ongoing global coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. As you are aware, COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that presents with symptoms similar to influenza and originated in the Wuhan area of China. The disease has been spreading globally to include two presumptive positive cases diagnosed in Rhode Island this weekend. Both the cases confirmed in Rhode Island have been diagnosed in persons who traveled recently with a Saint Raphael Academy school trip to Europe, including time spent in Italy. All persons who attended this trip are home for a 14 day quarantine and are self-monitoring for symptoms, as supervised by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). Rhode Island is not experiencing sustained or widespread community transmission of COVID-19 at this time. The most up-to-date general information regarding COVID-19 can be found at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>, and Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) website: <https://health.ri.gov/diseases/respiratory/?parm=163>.

The CDC advises the following routine best practices for remaining healthy during any infectious disease outbreak:

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom; before eating; after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Stay home when you are sick. PAS students who have symptoms of fever and cough or shortness of breath should NOT return to school after March break until they have been evaluated by a medical provider and have been fever free for a minimum of 24 hours without the use of antipyretic medications such as Tylenol/acetaminophen or Advil/ibuprofen.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue if possible and then discard the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and frequently touched objects with regular household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Please note that the routine use of surgical masks for healthy individuals in the general public is NOT advised by the CDC. Masks should be used by people showing symptoms of COVID-19 to help limit transmission from droplets and airborne particles spraying in the air, and for healthcare workers and those taking care of ill household members.

Portsmouth Abbey School is taking the following steps to address the evolving COVID-19 situation:

- PAS has an administrative committee to oversee planning for all potential operational, medical, safety, academic, communication, and student life impacts related to COVID-19. The committee will continue to meet during the March break and into the spring term as needed.
- The PAS Trips Committee met last week and decided to cancel all international school sponsored trips for the remainder of 2020 including all previously planned summer trips. This decision was made due to the potential risks involved for students who might be denied re-entry into the United States or face quarantine issues at international locations. Domestic trips planned for March break are still scheduled to take place at this time as the CDC has not issued any restrictions on travel within the United States, and there is no significant risk involved. We will continue to monitor CDC travel guidance on a daily basis and inform trip participants and parents of any changes to current recommendations.
- All Chinese and South Korean parents have been contacted over the past several weeks to offer a structured and supervised on-campus program during the March break in lieu of traveling home. At this time, the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all non-essential travel to China, Iran, South Korea, and Italy. We expect travel guidance to continue to change as the COVID-19 situation evolves. Parents are encouraged to review the CDC and Department of State guidance as you plan travel during the March break for your families. Travel guidance can be found at: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/> and <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>.
- The PAS medical staff will continue to follow all instruction provided by the CDC, RIDOH, and Department of State with regard to travel, screening/reporting, and care for any “person under investigation” for coronavirus. Students returning from travel after March break will be subject to any airport screening and quarantine restrictions put in place by the CDC. The recommendations and potential changes are evolving on a day-to-day basis. Our Infirmary policy for screening students who have any symptoms of respiratory illness can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html>. The screening protocol is quite specific with regard to both clinical symptomology and travel history. This protocol may change as sustained geographic transmission may expand beyond the currently identified areas of China, Iran, South Korea, Italy, and Japan. Any suspected cases of COVID-19 at PAS will be immediately reported to the RIDOH and further instruction for potential testing, treatment, quarantine, and/or school closure will be guided by protocols established at the State level.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding as we continue to monitor COVID-19 guidance. We will continue to update you with any information that may impact our students. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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