XXXXXXXX PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN

March 3, 2020

**Rationale**

Late winter into early spring brings with it an increase in the number of cases of contagious illnesses such as flu, colds, sinus infections, and pneumonia. In 2019, the Novel Coronavirus – 2019-nCoV (or “Coronavirus”) created further concerns including the possibility of a pandemic. School districts must be prepared to do their part to mitigate the spread of identified viruses. This document is designed to assure a structured response to declared pandemics.

**Definition of a Pandemic**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a pandemic is “*the worldwide spread of a new disease.”*

*“An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges and spreads around the world, and most people do not have immunity.*

*Some aspects of influenza pandemics can appear similar to seasonal influenza while other characteristics may be quite different. For example, both seasonal and pandemic influenza can cause infections in all age groups, and most cases will result in self-limited illness in which the person recovers fully without treatment. However, typical seasonal influenza causes most of its deaths among the elderly while other severe cases occur most commonly in people with a variety of medical conditions.*

*For both seasonal and pandemic influenza, the total number of people who get severely ill can vary. However, the impact or severity tends to be higher in pandemics in part because of the much larger number of people in the population who lack pre-existing immunity to the new virus. When a large portion of the population is infected, even if the proportion of those infected that go on to develop severe disease is small, the total number of severe cases can be quite large.”*

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), *“an influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of a new influenza A virus that is very different from current and recently circulating human seasonal influenza A viruses. Pandemics happen when new (novel) influenza A viruses emerge which are able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way.is a global outbreak of a new influenza A virus. Pandemics happen when new (novel) influenza A viruses emerge which are able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way.”*

*“When a pandemic influenza virus emerges, the virus can spread quickly because most people will not be immune and a vaccine might not be widely available to offer immediate protection. During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, for example, a new H1N1 virus was first identified in April 2009. By June 2009, that novel H1N1 virus had spread worldwide and the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. Spread of a pandemic influenza virus may occur in multiple disease “waves” that are separated by several months. As a pandemic influenza virus spreads, large numbers of people may need medical care worldwide. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces, and other places for mass gatherings may experience more absenteeism. Public health and healthcare systems can become overloaded, with elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Other critical infrastructure, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and transportation industry may also be affected.”*

**Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)**

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) are community mitigation strategies that are most effective when used early in a flu pandemic. Public health officials recommend that people practice everyday preventive actions at all times. These actions include staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, washing hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects.

During severe, very severe, or extreme flu pandemics, public health officials may recommend additional actions, such as using facemasks when sick and in close contact with other people, temporarily dismissing child care facilities and schools, and increasing the space between people and decreasing the frequency of contact among people (that is, social distancing).

**Cooperative Decision Making Team**

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerts communities to begin preparing for the spread of specific virus A in the United States, a Cooperative Decision Making Team (Team) will be activated. This team will meet on a regular basis to assess conditions and develop/activate response plans for a variety of possible scenarios.

This Team will consist of local superintendents and representatives from the Berrien County Health Department. The Team monitor guidance from the Center for Disease Prevention Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) when activated by the Governor.

**Guidance**

The following pages contain guidance on the most current outbreaks.

2020 – a novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) - 2019 Novel Coronavirus is a virus strain that has only spread in people since December 2019. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new virus and it has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia. The CDC is closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Cases of COVID-19 also are being reported in a growing number of countries internationally, including the United States.

**Communication**

The following guidance on communication is gleaned from the document *Communicating about Eastern Equine Encephalitis* created by the Michigan Schools Public Relations Association(MSPRA) in cooperation with Michigan Association of Secondary School Administrators (MASSP) and Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) in 2019.

**1. Begin with Research.**

* Identify information (re)sources.
* Contact your county health department/division.
* Discover your area’s status as it relates to current outbreaks.
* Ask your county health department/division:
  + Are you currently investigating any cases in our area?
  + Is there any current advisory in place for our area?
  + Do you have any plans to issue an advisory for our area?
  + What’s the best link to share with our families and school community for updates?
* Seek out and use information from existing resources.
  + Query your professional organization’s list serv.
  + Contact other districts in your immediate area.
  + Check with your legal counsel.
  + Read the MDHHS news release.
  + Review the CDC guidance on prevention.
  + Go to Michigan Emerging Disease Issues.

**2. Plan your Communication.**

* Identify target audiences and key messages. What do your audiences need to know?
* Identify effective communication tools. How does each audience receive its information?
* Assign tasks and establish a timeline. Who is going to do what, when?
* Identify a primary contact person. Who will coordinate the overall communication effort?

**3. Implement your Plan.**

* **Develop Talking Points/Key Messages.** 
  + Our primary concern is for the health and safety of our students, staff, and coaches.
  + Our schools have been closely monitoring the situation regarding XXXXXX.
  + We are following the guidance of our county health department/division and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). We are also following our board policy.
  + At this time, our county health department **has/has not** recommended XXXXX.
  + **If cancellation is not recommended,** cite the factors considered for maintaining current activity schedules at this time. (See box below for some factors.)
  + **If cancellation is recommended,** cite specific modifications that will be made.
* **Communicate With Your Audiences.** 
  + Include the link to health department/division updates in all your materials and posts.
  + Consider using social media posts: We’ve talked to our health department **on this date at this time** and there are currently no cases in our county; as of **this date and time** there are no advisories.
  + We know this information can change quickly. Please contact your health department/division directly for the latest information.

***OR***

* + We are following the lead of our health department/division as it relates to XXXXX. Here is the link to our health department’s/division’s most recent information.
  + Remind everyone: Regardless of the local advisory status, take precautions to avoid getting sick.
* **Board/Administration** 
  + Review your board policy.
  + Follow your county health department's/division’s recommended course of action.
* **School Staff** 
  + Remind staff to take recommended precautions.
  + Provide talking points to staff to share with community members who ask questions.
* **Students** 
  + Remind students to take recommended precautions.
* **Parents** 
  + Repeat your key message about keeping students safe.
  + Remind parents to take recommended precautions.
* **Media** 
  + Designate a spokesperson.
  + Use your key messages.
  + Understand that you don’t have to allow the media into your buildings, parking lots, or campus.
  + Know that there is nothing to prevent them from setting up outside, across the street.
* **Community Members** 
  + Remind them that schools are not the experts in this area. We rely on the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and county health departments/divisions for information and guidance.
  + Remind community members to take recommended precautions.

**4. Evaluate your Communication.**

* Keep track of virus related phone calls and inquiries.
* Monitor actions to determine if/how communication could be improved.
* Ask for feedback.
  + What worked?
  + What didn’t work?
  + What would you do differently?
* Adjust your communication plan for next time based on your evaluation.

Communication Options:

Email

Text

Phone

Memo

Website

Social media

See **APPENDIX A** for examples that have been designed as templates for communication with the parents and community in the event of flu outbreak and or pandemic.

**Education**

The following documents have been designed to educate staff, students, parents, and the community on issues related to the flu and/or a pandemic. Some are general while others are incident specific.

* Parents
* Students
* Staff
* Teachers
* Auxiliary Staff
* Maintenance
* General

**School Dismissal/Closing**

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerts communities to begin preparing for the spread of specific virus A in the United States, a Cooperative Decision Making Team (Team) will be activated. This team will meet on a regular basis to assess conditions and develop/activate response plans for a variety of possible scenarios. It is possible that this team will make the decision to dismiss or close school as a pre-emptive measure to mitigate the spread of a virus.

**Definitions**

A ***school closure*** means closing the school and sending all the students and staff home.

In a ***school dismissal***, the school may stay open for staff while the children stay home. Keeping school facilities open allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materi­als and other staff to continue to provide important services.

There are three types of school dismissals:

* *Selective dismissal* is used when all or most students in the school are at higher risk for complications once infected with flu. For example, a school for medically fragile children or for pregnant students may decide to close based on the local situ­ation while other schools in the community may remain open.
* *Reactive dismissal* is used when many students and staff are sick and are not at­tending school, or many students and staff are arriving at school sick and are being sent home.
* *Preemptive dismissal* is used early during a flu response in a community to decrease the spread of the flu before many students and staff get sick. This is based on information about the spread of *severe flu* in the region. This dismissal is most effective at decreasing flu spread and burden on the healthcare system when done early in relation to the amount of flu activity in the area.

No matter what type of school dismissal is chosen, all school-related mass gatherings should be canceled or postponed in order to decrease the spread of flu among students, their families and staff. This includes sporting events, school dances, performances, ral­lies, commencement ceremonies, and other events that bring large groups of people into close contact with one another.

**How Will Decisions Be Made About School Dismissal and/or Closure**

The decision to dismiss students will be made at the district level. School officials should work closely with their local and state public health and government officials to make sound decisions, based on local conditions. The decision should consider:

* the number and severity of cases in an outbreak (looking at national, regional, and local data),
* the risks of flu spread and benefits of dismissal,
* the problems that school dismissal can cause for families and communities, and different types of dismissal (selective, reactive, and preemptive).
* The length of time school should be dismissed will vary depending on how severe the flu is and how many people are sick. When the decision is made to dismiss students, CDC recommends doing so for 5-7 calendar days. Near the end of this period, communities should reassess the severity and impact of the flu, the benefits of keeping students home, and the consequences of doing so. Based on this reassessment, communities can decide whether to extend the school dismissal for another week or to reopen the school. However, if a flu outbreak is determined to be severe, a longer time period may be recommended.

NOTE: CDC may recommend preemptive dismissals based on information that the outbreak is becoming more severe. An increase in flu spread without an impact on disease out­comes will not lead to the use of preemptive dismissals in most cases.

**Intermediate Remedial Measures**

**General Steps to Prevent the Spread of Virus**

**Steps to Keep Students and Staff from Getting Sick with the Flu**

NOTE: These steps should be followed ALL the time, and not only during a flu pan­demic.

**General Steps:**

* Encourage respiratory etiquette by providing staff and students
  + education and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes, and
  + easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand rubs.
* Remind staff and students to practice good hand hygiene and provide the time and supplies for students and staff to wash their hands when needed.
* Send sick students and staff home. Advise students, staff, and families that sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). They should stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever even if they are using antiviral medicines. Schools should revise their policies and incentives to avoid unknowingly penalizing students who stay home when they are sick (e.g., perfect attendance awards).
* Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended. Some states and localities have laws about specific cleaning products used in schools. School officials should contact their state health department and department of environmental protection for additional guidance.
* Move students and staff who become sick at school to a separate room until they can be sent home. Limit the number of staff who take care of the sick person and provide a surgical mask for the sick person to wear if they can tolerate it.
* Have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks available and ensure it is worn by school nurses and other staff caring for sick people at school.
* Encourage sick students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to get a medical evaluation as soon as possible. It’s very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with the flu and have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications. Other people may also be treated with antiviral drugs by their health care provider this season.
* Consider dismissing students if a large proportion of staff are at higher risk of flu-related complications. This strategy would be applicable to very few schools nation­wide. Settings where this strategy might be appropriate are in schools for pregnant women and schools with many medically fragile children.
* In the COVID-19 pandemic, some health authorities are suggested (not requiring) that persons who have been abroad, especially to mainland China, South Korea, Italy, or who come into contact with those who have been abroad in those countries impacted by the virus, remain home for 14 calendar days (the quarantine period currently being used in specific coronavirus situations), and obtain a medical examination to rule out infection with the coronavirus. Should a school have a student or students who fit this criteria, it is recommended that the school district make accommodations for such students, such as receiving homework assignments and notes/recordings from classroom lectures and instruction.

**Specific Steps if FLU Conditions Become More Severe**

In addition to the steps that schools should be taking all the time, if flu conditions be­come more severe, schools and families should consider adding the following steps.

* Extend the time sick students or staff stay home to at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.
* Schools should allow high risk students and staff to stay home. These students and staff should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider.
* Schools should conduct active symptom screening of students and staff upon arrival at school. Any sick students or staff should be separated from others, offered a sur­gical mask, and sent home.
* If a household member is sick, parents should keep any school-aged children home for 5 days from the time the first person in the home became sick. Parents should monitor the health of their other children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.
* Schools should find ways to increase social distances (the space between people) at school if possible.
* Schools should work closely with their county and state public health officials to de­cide how and when to dismiss students. If the decision is made to dismiss students, schools should notify public health and education agencies by submitting a report about the dismissal at www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal. Students should be dis­missed for 5 to 7 days and near the end of this period, communities should reassess to determine if students can return to school.
* Other Considerations:
  + Staggered school times
  + Canceling sports events and other mass gatherings
  + Spacing students’ desks three feet apart in small pods or clusters.
  + Discouraging prolonged congregation in hallways, lunch rooms, etc.
  + Staggering bus routes so there are fewer people on each route.
  + Limiting group activities and interaction between classes.
  + Canceling gym class, choir, or other school activities that place individuals in close proximity.
  + Gatherings of groups larger than normal class size should be cancelled and avoided (e.g. assemblies, recess).
  + Cancel all extra-curricular activities.
  + If possible, serve box lunches in classrooms to avoid gathering of students in the cafeteria;
  + Stagger dismissal;
  + Rotating teachers between classrooms while keeping the same group of students in one classroom
  + Canceling classes that bring students together from multiple classrooms
  + Holding classes outdoors
  + Postponing class trips

**Remote Learning Opportunities**

In the event of a school dismissal or closure, student learning continues to be a top priority. In examining Remote Learning Options, the following items should be considered:

* Student/home access to internet
* Technology (device) requirements
* Available online resources
* Grade level of the student
  + Independence
  + Support
* Academic level of the student
  + Special education hours
* How do we provide direct instruction
* Nonacademic courses
* Current practices
* Opportunity for interaction with instructor
* Opportunity for student-to-student contact
* Access to materials (books for reading logs, art supplies, . . .)

Options:

* Work packets
* Online programs
* Google Classroom
* Schoology
* Skype
* Reading logs
* Exercise logs
* Art projects
* Practice logs (music)
* Education software
  + Study Island
  + Reading Eggs/Math Seeds
  + Other

**Remote Learning Opportunities by Level**

Building level administrators will work closely with staff to discuss and develop options that are appropriate for your subject and grade level. These plans should be prepared for 5-7 days of class time.

**Remote Learning Elementary**

* **Core Academic Subjects**
* **Exploratory Subjects**
* **Special Education**

**Remote Learning Middle School**

* **Core Academic Subjects**
* **Exploratory Subjects**
* **Special Education**

**Remote Learning High School**

* **Core Academic Subjects**
* **Exploratory Subjects**
* **CTE**
* **Special Education**

**Example of Local District School Closure/Remote Learning Plan**

The determination to close a school or schools will be a joint decision between the (school district) and the (LOCAL) Department of Public Health. The duration of the closure will be determined collaboratively and could last up to 14 days.

Students and families will be notified of a school closure via email. School closure information will also be posted on our school websites.

**Academics**

In the event of school closure due to outbreak of a contagious illness, the following steps will be taken:

1. Students will be asked to take home all instructional materials, such as textbooks, notebooks and supplemental materials
2. Each school site will provide a device to students who do not have access to this resource at home.
3. The District will provide hotspot internet connections to students who do not have such access at home.
4. Teachers will email assignments to students.
5. Teachers and Counselors will respond to student emails sent during regular school hours.
6. Students are expected to complete all assignments provided by teachers during the closure.
7. Assignments are meant to maintain continuity of learning, but will not be able to fully replicate in-class experiences such as science labs, group discussions, etc.

*\*School facilities will undergo deep cleaning and disinfecting during the closure.*

**Sports/Extracurriculars**

1. In the event of a school closure due to an infectious disease outbreak, all extracurricular activities and sporting events, including rehearsals and practices, will be immediately postponed until school is reopened.
2. Away games will be cancelled, even if the other venue is not subject to school closure.
3. No students or non-essential staff will be allowed on campus until school is reopened.
4. Re-scheduling of such events will be determined on a case by case basis.

**Community Use of School Facilities:**

1. All school facilities, including swimming pools and sports fields, will remain closed to the public during a school closure of this nature. Community access to facilities will resume when schools reopen.
2. All facility rentals and Community Education classes will be cancelled or postponed until schools are safe to reopen.

During a closure, the District will send updates at the end of each day to provide ongoing information to our families and staff. Those updates will go out by 6pm each day.

**Staff Responsibilities**

* **Central Administration and Support Staff**

Report as usual. Will act as hub for communications and consistency of operations.

* **Building Level Administrators and Support Staff**

Report as usual.

* **Teachers**

Create 5-7 day plans.

Available for two way communication/direct instruction via remote options during school hours.

* **Paraprofessionals**

On Call.

* **Maintenance**

On days. All hand on deck.

Follow specified protocals.

* **Food Service**

On Call.

* **Transportation**

On Call. Clean Buses.

**APPENDIX A**

**Communication Examples and Templates**

Dear Parents:

As you may have heard in the news, efforts are being made to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Your child’s school plays an important role in that effort. Although there have not been any reported cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, we wanted our families to be aware that DISTRICT is in close communication with the Berrien County Health Department and will continue to follow their guidance and recommendations. At this time, no action has been recommended other than to encourage the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) preventative measures:

* Frequently washing your hands with soap and water.
* Covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
* Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
* Staying home when you are sick (children and adults).

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend the use of facemasks for the general public.*

To help families learn more about the virus, we have dedicated a section of our website to share CDC, MDHHS and Berrien County Health Department resources and general information. Please visit WEBSITE and look for the “Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information” link at the top of the page.

As always, the safety and well-being of our students is our top priority. We will continue monitoring the development of COVID-19 and plan accordingly in partnership with local, state, and federal health and government officials.

Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your children.

Sincerely,

PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: Staff**

**From: SUPERINTENDENT**

**Date: March 2, 2020**

**RE: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

On Friday, February 28, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that she has activated the State Emergency Operations Center to coordinate with local, state and federal agencies to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Schools across the state of Michigan are part of that coordinated effort and have been asked to work with their county health departments should specific actions need to take place.

Although there have not been any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, DISTRICT is in close communication with the Berrien County Health Department and will continue to follow their guidance and recommendations. At this time, no action has been recommended other than to encourage the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) preventative measures:

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* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
* Staying home when you are sick.

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend the use of facemasks for the general public.*

To help our staff and families learn more about the virus, we have dedicated a section of our website to share CDC, MDHHS and Berrien County Health Department resources and general information. Please visit WEBSITE and look for the “Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information” link at the top of the page.

As always, the safety and well-being of our staff, students and school community is our top priority. We will continue monitoring the development of COVID-19 and plan accordingly in partnership with local, state, and federal health and government officials.

COVID-19 Staff Email

Staff,

Please see the attached memo pertaining to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). I have been working alongside several other area superintendents and the Berrien County Health Department in developing messaging to staff, parents, and the community. We are also finalizing a Pandemic Response Plan that coordinates with our recently updated Emergency Operations Plan. In general, unless directed otherwise, we continue to utilize the same concepts as we do when we are in the midst of flu season. These include encouraging:

* Frequent hand washing,
* Covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough,
* Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth,
* Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects
* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and
* Staying at home when you are sick.

The added components to a Pandemic Response Plan include criteria and the actions to be taken in the event that schools must be dismissed or closed for a period of time. The CDC, while stating that the risk remains low, has asked that schools prepare for such situations. Our ultimate plan will include Remote Learning Opportunities in case we are directed to close. Details of the plans will be distributed by your administrator once completed.

I have also attached some documents to help keep you informed about COVID-19.

Please understand that this is an evolving scenario. We will do all we can to keep informed by the best authorities and make decisions based on the best available information.

Attached:

COVID-19 Memo to Staff

COVID-19 CDC Fact Sheet

COVID-19 MDHHS Fact Sheet

Protect Your Students from the Flu

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

As you may have heard in the news, efforts are being made to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Schools play an important role in that effort. Although there have not been any reported cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, we wanted our families to be aware that XXXXXXX Public Schools is in close communication with the Berrien County Health Department and will continue to follow their guidance and recommendations. At this time, no action has been recommended other than to encourage the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) preventative measures:

* Frequently washing your hands with soap and water.
* Covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
* Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
* Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
* Staying home when you are sick (children and adults).

To help families learn more about the virus, we have dedicated a section of our website to share CDC, MDHHS and XXXXXX County Health Department resources and general information. Please visit (web address) and look for the “Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information” section on the home page.

As always, the safety and well-being of our students is our top priority. We will continue monitoring the development of COVID-19 and plan accordingly in partnership with local, state, and federal health and government officials.

**APPENDIX B**

**Educational Documents**

**APPENDIX C**

**Maintenance Standards**

**APPENDIX D**

**Resources**