Dear Tucson Unified Community,

With Coronavirus (COVID-19) being a top news story, you may have questions about this global outbreak and how we are responding.

**What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. Cases of COVID-19 have been found on every continent except Antarctica, and it continues to spread. In the United States, there are very few confirmed cases and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that currently, the public risk remains low. The virus poses the greatest risk to people over 60 and those with chronic health conditions, like respiratory problems or compromised immune systems. At this time, no cases have been confirmed in Pima County.

**What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Fever, coughing, and difficulty breathing are symptoms associated with COVID-19 but may also be associated with other respiratory illnesses, including influenza. While a potential outbreak is concerning, there are other respiratory viruses like the flu and colds that are circulating in our schools. Therefore, anyone exhibiting these symptoms should not be assumed to have COVID-19.

**How can I protect my student?**

We should all take preventative measures to avoid the spread of respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 and Influenza.

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** Handwashing strategies include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- **Keep children home when sick,** and stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze, then immediately discard any tissues.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact, like holding hands.

**What is Tucson Unified doing to respond to COVID-19?**

We are taking precautions inside of our schools in order to provide a healthy learning environment for our students. These include disinfecting high touch surfaces that are used on a regular basis using Mediclean spray. This is not a bleach-based product and is what is recommended. Please view the [video on best practices for disinfecting](#).

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March 9, 2020
Is it possible that Tucson Unified will close schools?

In cases like this, TUSD follows the direction of the Pima County Health Department (PCHD). At this time the Pima County Health Department is not recommending the closure of the Tucson Unified School District or any other school or district. Before making a decision to close any school, the Pima County Health Department considers many factors, including but not limited to, the severity of the outbreak, benefits to public health, impact on student learning, families, childcare, school staff, and the economy.

Other important points to keep in mind regarding the possibility of school closures:

- Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the current likelihood that PCHD will recommend closing schools is extremely low, but not zero. At this time, school closures are not recommended.
- PCHD will notify schools prior to recommending closure.

PCHD has set up a special website on COVID-19, which is available through this link.

Future student travel plans:

The Tucson Unified School District adheres to travel advisory warnings issued by the United States Department of State and the US Center for Disease Control. We will cancel trips if there is a Level 3 Advisory and will require additional parent permission if there is a Level 2 Advisory. TUSD continues to monitor the recommendations of the CDC and local health authority advisories to determine whether to travel to specific locations within or outside the US will be impacted. At this time, we will proceed with travel as planned within the U.S.

Currently, both agencies have issued Level 3 advisory warnings encouraging the cancellation of all non-essential travel to the Republic of Korea. As of this date, the district has canceled its planned summer travel to South Korea as part of the Tucson Korea Ambassador Program otherwise known as TKAP.

We are in close contact with County and State health officials regarding this rapidly changing situation. As we receive updates that affect our school community, we will pass them along to you.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Trujillo, Ed.D.
Superintendent