

## **FAQ regarding COVID-19 closures (March 10, 2020)**

### **Why has City Schools cancelled classes?**

Under direction of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) will close all campuses effective March 16, 2020 to March 27, 2020. All school building activities including school day instruction, child care, health services, enrichment, athletics and club sports, preschool etc. are canceled during this time.

### **What steps is the district taking to disrupt the spread of COVID-19?**

We have cancelled or rescheduled some events that bring large groups of students, adults, and community members together. This includes, but is not limited to, large school community events, school day assemblies, all student travel, and activities outside of school hours (i.e. overnight field trips and competitions). All district-and-school sponsored out-of-state and international travel has been canceled through June 15.

### **What is the schedule for Spring Break for students?**

State education officials indicated that days missed during this period would be made up during our original Spring Break dates. Accordingly, City Schools is requesting the Board of School Commissioners adjust the schedule as follows: In order to use the originally-scheduled spring break to make up the time missed for schools - principals and PSASA/BTU central office staff will be on spring break from March 20-27, and all other central office staff will be on spring break from March 23-25.

### **Will students be able to receive lessons during the closure?**

Due to issues of equity and access, we cannot provide digital learning opportunities in lieu of in-classroom instruction. Teachers are being asked to prepare supplemental instructional materials and pre-plan weekly lessons. City Schools will provide grade-level learning packets for students via the City Schools website beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. Hard copies will be available at your school between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 through Thursday, March 19, 2020. This instructional work provides instructional activities for students – not graded work. Although this work is voluntary, we encourage families to pick up their child's packet to sustain their educational involvement during the period of closure.

### **Will students be able to receive meals during the closure?**

City Schools will also operate an emergency food service program at a minimum of eight sites from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning Monday, March 16, 2020, through Friday, March 20, 2020. Students will be able to receive take-out, or grab-and-go, free breakfast and lunch meals. The sites will be announced by Sunday, March 15, 2020 and will be listed on the Health Updates webpage. In line with the Governor's direction regarding congregation during the COVID-19 outbreak, these will not be group meals. Meals will be provided in the form of take-out, or grab and go packages. The district will also be working closely with our partners and Baltimore City's Emergency Food Working Group to identify additional options for food access and distribution for the week of March 23.

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### **What preventative steps is the City Schools taking?**

Prevention measures include providing resources, supplies, and time for all students to wash their hands when they arrive at school, before lunch, and after using the restroom. Additionally, custodial staff have been directed to prioritize cleaning common and high traffic areas throughout the day. Prioritized cleaning includes touchpoints, bathrooms, the lunchroom, common spaces, door handles, emergency bar on doors, etc. All efforts will be made to keep students healthy and safe.

### **How are we cleaning our buildings?**

The district had previously issued instructions to school leaders and custodian supervisors for cleaning and disinfecting all high touchpoints in high-traffic areas. We also ordered significant quantities of disinfectant, soap, hand sanitizers, paper towels and gloves.

We will use this closure period as an opportunity to perform deep cleaning in 153 school buildings and offices by our custodial staff, supported by a pre-identified team to supplement crews at schools as needed.

Our transportation staff will implement similar deep cleaning and disinfecting procedures on district-owned fleet of 38 buses. We have instructed our contracted bus operators to perform the same procedures on the estimated 350 buses in our contractor fleet, and transportation staff are scheduling an emergency contractor meeting to review cleaning and other operational expectations. The district also uses about 400 taxi cabs daily to transport students, and all cab companies have been instructed to disinfect their vehicles

### **How will City Schools be keeping families, staff, and students informed regarding Coronavirus?**

City Schools is providing updates daily through its Health Updates website – [www.baltimorecityschools.org/health-updates](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/health-updates). The district is also sending regular emails to families and staff to provide the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19. This is a rapidly evolving situation. We have also established a COVID information hotline for families, at 443-984-2000.

The district continues to follow the guidance of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Baltimore City Health Department in our response to COVID -19, including decisions to close schools and whether students or staff would need to be quarantined. As soon as new information becomes available, we will let you know. In the event a school will need to close, families will receive notifications similar to weather-related closures, through call, email, and SMS messages. Please make sure your contact information is up to date at your child's school.

### **What are the procedures and instructions for students to wash their hands?**

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Hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the most effective way to contain the spread of illness and disease, including COVID-19. [Learn more about hand washing and proper technique by watching this video.](#)

We are asking schools to prioritize student hand washing when students arrive at school, anytime they have used the restroom, and prior to lunch. These are always good habits and critical to the containment of the disease. Our school-based staff will be prioritizing hand washing, and custodial staff will keep soap fully stocked in bathrooms and classrooms to support these efforts. Staff will also reinforce good hygiene and remind students to not touch their face, nose, or mouth, sneeze into a tissue or elbow, and reduce physical hand contact (high fives, first bumps, etc.).

### **I am an employee that believes I have been exposed to COVID-19.**

#### **What should I do?**

Baltimore City Health Department conducts routine public health investigations, including in cases where COVID-19 exposure may be suspected. **If you are a Baltimore City Public Schools employee with concerns about COVID-19 and whether you should report to work**, you are strongly encouraged to contact Jeremy Grant-Skinner, Chief of Human Capital, by [email](#) or telephone at 443-642-4048.

As is the case with other communicable diseases, if a person is believed to have been exposed to COVID-19, the Baltimore City Health Department will follow up with you directly and take other appropriate action.