Dear New Canaan Public Schools Community,

I am writing to provide an update on the district’s efforts related to student, staff, and community health and wellness, particularly in light of recent developments with the Influenza virus and the rapidly evolving situation with the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

This year, the New Canaan Public Schools have been unusually hard-hit by Influenza, with approximately four (4) times the number of cases reported in our schools as in the past few years. Although the weather is warming, Influenza is still in its peak season, and to best protect yourself please continue following guidelines and protocols outlined in previous emails, which are repeated below.

In early January, the district began speaking regularly with the local Health Department to understand and assess the potential threats and issues related to the emergence of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. If you have followed this news, you’re aware that our understanding of the virus, including its impact, transmission, incubation period, and longevity, has continued to improve since COVID-19 first appeared in December 2019, and that it remains a rapidly evolving situation.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we continue to draw upon our knowledge of similar coronaviruses to develop our understanding of COVID-19. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person through close contact (about 6 feet or less), and respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may also be possible that touching an object that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes can lead to transmission, although this is not thought to be the primary means. Although some spread may be possible before people show symptoms, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic. (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html)

The CDC reports that COVID-19 has resulted in symptoms from mild to severe, and can include fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath. Additionally, CDC believes that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear between two (2) and fourteen (14) days after exposure based on what has been seen previously with similar viruses.https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html

While there is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, guidelines and protocols to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, which we encourage all to follow regularly (and especially during flu season each year), include the following:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose and/or after coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water if they are visibly dirty.

Of course, even the most vigilant protective measures are not perfect, and as mentioned earlier we have had many cases of Influenza in the New Canaan Public Schools this year. If you or your child are not feeling well, please do the following:

- Stay home and take good care of yourself
- Contact the school nurse if you have the flu
- Do not return to work/school until you are fever free for at least 24 hours without ibuprofen or Tylenol

We are continuously monitoring this situation, and will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available. In the meantime, please be assured that we are actively engaged in monitoring, managing, and preparing for potential impacts of COVID-19 on our school and community. Our efforts include:

- Ongoing cleaning routines in our classrooms, schools, buses, and other areas
- Ensuring our schools are equipped with soap, sanitizer, and other supplies
- Developing plans to provide off-site educational experiences for students if the need arises
- Meeting with regional school district leaders to pool our knowledge and coordinate our planning.

Most importantly, due to the evolving nature of COVID-19, we will remain in close contact with our local and state Health Departments and New Canaan Emergency Management to ensure we continue to make the most well-informed decisions on behalf of the entire NCPS community.

Additional communications will be sent out as we learn more. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me directly at bryan.luizzi@ncps-k12.org or any one of our excellent school nurses at each of our buildings.

My best regards,

Bryan

Bryan D. Luizzi, Ed. D.
Superintendent
New Canaan Public Schools