

March 11, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians.

As Coronavirus has begun to spread throughout the US, we must work to prepare so that we can protect the health and safety of all. However, testing for the virus has only recently begun in the United States and only a small number of people have been tested in NM so far.

We have been asked by the CDC to keep families informed about school protocols and possible plans in the case of closure. Please know that at this point, we are just informing parents for awareness. No additional action is required other than extra vigilance for staying healthy.

Preparing and Planning Ahead

Here are some efforts in which we are already engaged:

- **Increasing handwashing and updating cleaning routines. We are reviewing best practice for handwashing with staff and students. Since viruses can live on surfaces after they've been touched, our cleaning service is taking extra precautions by disinfecting and regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, light switches, and countertops.**
- **Review of The School Safety Plan including prevention and training for staff and students in the event of pandemic has been shared with staff.**
- **Developing protocols for a school closure in the event it is deemed absolutely necessary. We could be directed by a state or federal agency to close schools to prevent community spread of the infection. If that should happen, our leadership team will work with health and education officials to discuss when to close schools and for how long. We understand that the competent authorities, including the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) and New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) would base this decision on several factors, including reported infection rates and staff/student attendance.**
- **Keeping the learning process moving forward. The good news here is that the transition to possible home learning is less impactful than in traditional schools, in that students can continue online course work. Please know we will only take this drastic measure if instructed by state officials that all schools close. It is the goal and expectation of Taos Academy that the learning process is disrupted as little as possible and that our students continue to engage in their education.**
- **Considering limits on large-group gatherings and travel. As COVID-19 spreads, it may be best to limit student exposure to large groups of people and to limit travel.**

Parents and Families-Take Action

Please help prevent others from getting sick by doing the following:

- 1) **Focus on [handwashing](#). Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds and strongly encourage your children to do the same, including at appropriate times at school. Please encourage your children to frequently wash their hands, especially after using the bathroom, after using a tissue, before they eat, and after they have been playing outside.**
- 2) **Students should stay home when they are sick and not return to school until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications. If antibiotics have been prescribed for any illness, it's important to be on them 24 hours before returning to school.**

- 3) **Encourage your children to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.**
- 4) **Ask your children to use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes, then dispose of the tissue. When a tissue is not available, ask them to cough or sneeze into an elbow.**
- 5) **Unless [contraindicated](#) medically, have your children get the flu shot if not already vaccinated.**

Plan Ahead for Childcare

Parents and families should please make plans now regarding who will care for their children if schools should close. If schools are closed due to the coronavirus, the Taos Youth Center, Aquatic Center and other public facilities will also be closed.

If there is an all school closure, you will receive notification (like we do on inclement weather days) to give you instructions. No matter what, you can be assured that our students will remain a priority and we will do our best to continue providing a safe learning environment at TA.

If you have any further concerns or questions, feel free to contact the school or email the director tfiliss@taosacademy.org

Respectfully,

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