March 12, 2020

Dear Excel Academy Family,

All Excel Academy schools will be open tomorrow with our normal 11:30am dismissal. These are the reasons why we will stay open:

1. We have no known or presumptive cases of COVID-19 within Excel, and there are no known examples of community transmission in Boston or Chelsea.
2. There is a likely chance of a longer-term closure next week, and we would like to prepare our students for potentially being off-site for an extended period of time.

There are still no known cases of COVID-19 within our Excel Academy community, however, the number of confirmed or presumed positive cases in Massachusetts increased to 91 as of Tuesday, which led to the Governor declaring a state of emergency. [Boston Public Health Commission](https://www.bphc.org/onlinenewsroom/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=1282) (BPHC) says there is no evidence of local transmission of the virus, meaning the positive cases have been tracked to a specific origin. We will continue to monitor the situation and follow guidance from the MA Department of Public Health (DPH), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and other local, state, and federal agencies.

I also want to share with you the measures we are taking to ensure the health of our school community while we continue to operate.

* **Students and staff should not come to school if they display any of the** [**symptoms of COVID-19**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/8AR4mBdBlzyG_o7UO04DNg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRgRtLDP0RIaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY2RjLmdvdi9jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy8yMDE5LW5jb3YvZG93bmxvYWRzL0NPVklEMTktc3ltcHRvbXMucGRmVwdzY2hvb2xtQgoAAEOfZV4lQtc9UhdzdGVwaG1nZW5kcm9uQGdtYWlsLmNvbVgEAAAAAQ~~) **or other respiratory illnesses, including a fever, cough or shortness of breath.** Our nurses are actively monitoring student health and will dismiss students as needed. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to your school nurse if you have questions or concerns.
* In line with guidance from the Department of Public Health, staff who have returned from travel to countries with concern about COVID-19 have been excluded from school until a quarantine period of 14 days has elapsed and they have been cleared by their primary care provider to return. We do not believe any staff member has been exposed to COVID-19 but have enacted this requirement out of an abundance of caution and to ensure we implement health guidelines to their fullest.
* Our normal school cleaning routines are in compliance with the CDC’s guidelines. We have additionally stepped up efforts to maintain a clean environment by increasing the frequency with which surfaces such as door handles are disinfected, in order to prevent any spread of germs on these surfaces.
* We have made adjustments to our greeting protocol to include a non-physical welcome for students, instead of a handshake.
* We are canceling all events that include groups of visitors into our schools, including community members and parents in contact with students in a setting in which there are not sufficient opportunities for social distancing, will be cancelled or moved to a remote option until April break.
  + Family conferences in early April will be conducted via phone
  + Events such as plays, talent shows or dances should be canceled or rescheduled until after April break
* We are also canceling field trips until after the April break.
* We are proactively preparing to support the learning needs of students should there be a school closure. For our middle school students, our core content teachers will create paper-based work packets for students to complete while at home in the event of a school closure. High school students will have access to online learning via their Chromebooks.

As always, children and adults should be reminded to take everyday precautionary steps to stay healthy, including:

* Wash hands frequently, with soap and hot water, for at least 20 seconds.
* When you are sick, stay home to protect others and practice social distancing.
* Always cover your cough or sneeze, using the inside of your elbow (instead of your hands).

We have launched a website: <https://www.excelacademy.org/coronavirusupdates/> to provide you with the latest details on our preparedness activities and response to this evolving situation. We will keep this site updated over the days and weeks to come, and we will continue to send you health updates and share the latest via social media.

We are also in contact with our community partners at the [East Boston Neighborhood Health Center (EBNHC)](https://www.ebnhc.org/) to ensure a coordinated effort to serve and inform our community. If you have symptoms or are concerned you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you can receive testing at EBNHC. It is highly recommended that you call first before visiting the health center. If you are already a patient at EBNHC you may call your department directly (adult medicine or pediatrics). If you are not already a patient, you may call 617.569.5800 to speak with EBNHC’s expert staff (available in multiple languages).

Any students who have to miss school due to illness or self-quarantine will be held harmless and be allowed to work from home, if they are able.

Finally, schools across the world have seen an increase in anti-immigrant and anti-Asian discrimination as a result of this virus, and I’d like to ask you to join me in affirming our community values, including our commitment to ensuring that all Excel students and staff feel safe and protected when they are at school. Please contact me or any administrator directly if you are aware of instances of bias, discrimination, or bullying.

We will continue to ensure you have the best, most correct and up-to-date information as it becomes available. Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we come together to respond to this worldwide issue.

Thanks as always,



Owen Stearns

CEO

Excel Academy Charter Schools

**Resources & Information:**

* CDC updates on COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>
* MA DPH updates on COVID-19: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>
* CDC seasonal flu fact sheets: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/freeresources/multi-language-factsheets.html>
* CDC prevention & treatment guidance for COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>
* Boston Public Health Commission COVID-19 fact sheet (English): <https://bphc.org/whatwedo/infectious-diseases/Infectious-Diseases-A-to-Z/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20Languages/2019%20novel%20coronavirus/English.pdf>
* Boston Public Health Commission COVID-19 fact sheet (Spanish): <https://bphc.org/whatwedo/infectious-diseases/Infectious-Diseases-A-to-Z/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20Languages/2019%20novel%20coronavirus/Spanish.pdf>

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Q: What do I do if I am sick or have a concern that I have been exposed?**

**A:** As always, we encourage all students and staff to stay home if they are sick or have symptoms of illness. Please call the school to excuse your child and speak to the school nurse if your child will be out for multiple days and you do not have a doctor’s note. If a member of your immediate is sick with the flu or exhibiting flu-like symptoms and your child may have been exposed, please call the school and ask to speak with your nurse to determine whether your child should come to school.

**Q: What do I do if I have recently traveled to China or another area where there is community transmission of COVID-19?**

**A:** For the time being, we are asking all members of the Excel community who have recently traveled (within the past two weeks) to a country where there is community transmission of COVID-19 **not to come to school until cleared**. Please call your school and ask to speak with your school nurse if this situation may apply to your family. Areas where there is community transmission currently include China, Italy, South Korea, Iran, and Japan; within the United States there is [believed to be community transmission](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0228-additional-COVID-19-cases.html) in parts of Washington, Oregon, and California.

**Q: Is school going to be closed?**

**A:** At this time we have not been advised to close school or make other changes to regular programming. If school closure or changes to programming become advisable or necessary in the future, we will provide additional information at that time.