

Rhea County Department of Education



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Dear Parents/Guardians of Rhea County Students,

The Rhea County Department of Education is working closely with our local and state health partners as we monitor the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is a respiratory illness with symptoms that include shortness of breath, fever, and cough.

As of March 10, 2020, there has been only 6 confirmed case of the COVID-19 in the state of Tennessee. Additionally, the risk remains low for the general public at this time. While this information is reassuring, we understand that there are concerns about this new virus. Additionally, the recent announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encouraging communities to prepare for the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. has raised new questions.

The Rhea County Department of Education will continue to be in close contact with our local and state health partners to continuously monitor this situation. Additionally, the school district has a pandemic plan within the District Safety Plan, which is being reviewed to support the health and safety of our students, staff, and community. In the event of cases in our community, we would follow our public health partners' lead on health/disease control measures as necessary. Our focus continues to be ensuring the safety of all students and staff, and continuing education with minimal disruption.

The district will also prioritize cleaning procedures within each of our schools. This will include extra cleaning in high contact areas of each school as well as the entire fleet of school buses within the district. Additionally, the district staff will track attendance daily at each school. Should the percentage of staff or students spike at any location within the district, we will work with our custodial staff to provide additional efforts to help prevent the spread of germs. This extra attention has allowed our schools to remain open during the flu season when other local school districts have closed due to high absenteeism of students with the flu.

Helping Families Stay Healthy:

As always, we recommend that people stay home when sick, cover coughs and sneezes, and practice good handwashing hygiene. These recommendations are especially important during the cold and flu season. Below are everyday actions you and your family can take to stay healthy.

- **Sneeze and cough into your elbow or cover with a tissue.** In other words, keep germs off of your hands. Put used tissues in a wastebasket and then wash your hands.
- **Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**, especially after going to the restroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread that way.
- **Don't share personal items**, including toothbrushes, towels, cups/glasses, utensils, etc.
- **Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched**, using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe following the instructions on the label.
- **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **If your children get sick, please keep them home from school** and limit contact with others. If your child is ill and has recently traveled to an area affected by COVID-19, or has been around someone who has been infected with COVID-19, contact your child's healthcare provider immediately.

Thank you for your continued support in keeping our students and staff healthy and safe.

Mr. Jerry Levengood
Director, Rhea County Schools