



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY
PACIFIC
UNIT 35007
APO AP 96376-5007**

**All DoDEA Pacific Parents and Employees v2
Subject: DoDEA Pacific COVID-19 Update -March 1, 2020**

First let me thank all of our staff in Korea for their swift action and dedication while providing virtual learning opportunities for our students to maintain continuity of education. Additional gratitude to our parents for their support and understanding as we travel these uncharted waters. Our Pacific staff, students, families and command are nothing short of amazing!

As we monitor and manage the impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus here in the Pacific, I would like to provide you with an update on the measures underway in our region. As the public and media focus on the global coronavirus outbreak continues to grow, understandably, we are receiving an increasing number of questions from anxious parents and employees.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. The best source and the latest information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) is *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html> or DoDEA's COVID-19 site: <https://www.dodea.edu/Coronavirus.cfm>.

As we do in all health-related cases, our districts and schools are working in collaboration with our various commands, the local Military Treatment Facilities (MTF), and the CDC. We have no confirmed cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) at this time in any DoDEA Pacific school or office. This is a fluid and rapidly changing situation. We are monitoring developments closely.

Please know that, as always, the health and safety of our students and staff is our highest priority, and we will remain vigilant in our efforts to help prevent the spread of this illness. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Health officials tell us that stopping the spread of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy.

Our schools have protocols in place to minimize the spread of viruses and a variety of other illnesses. However, we need your help. There are several steps students, staff and community members can take to minimize the spread of all respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19:

- Practicing good hygiene can help to limit the spread of viruses in our schools.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

- Stay home when you are sick and do not return to work or school until you have been fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours.
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash; if tissues aren't available, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. The virus may live on surfaces such as desks and door handles. Our custodial staff will continue to regularly clean classrooms and common areas with the standards for cleanliness that we have established for all schools.

All DoDEA schools are prepared to take additional steps or precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff should local MTF officials identify such a need. Actions we have underway are listed below. We...

- continue to collaborate, share information, and to review/update our school emergency response plans with district and local command officials to help protect the entire school community.
- build on everyday practices such as encouraging hand hygiene, monitoring and planning for absenteeism, and communicating routinely.
- postpone or cancel field/study trips that could expose students and staff to potential community spread of COVID-19.
- establish procedures for students and staff who are sick at school.
- perform routine environmental cleaning.
- plan for the continuity of teaching and learning if there is community spread of COVID-19.

As you are aware, out of an abundance of caution, USFK command officials temporarily closed our eight schools on the Korea peninsula accompanied by other closure and restrictions of public venues and gatherings. In those locations, our educators and support staff implemented alternative procedures to assure the continuity of instruction including web-based distance instruction, telephone trees, lessons and assignments/instruction via the many technologies we have available to us. However, closing DoDEA schools, even briefly, substantially impacts the entire military community. In addition to education, many children receive important services through our schools and we are working with command and health officials to determine when we can safely and appropriately reopen those schools.

To date, command officials in Japan, Okinawa, or Guam have not recommended school closures. We are working closely with officials and also monitoring school operational decisions related to the coronavirus in host nation schools. If additional school closures become a necessary precaution, they will be implemented in a way to give you and your family adequate time to respond.

Given the heightened risk that travel presents, we have cancelled all of the Far East academic and athletic student activities through the end of March and will revisit the option of continuing activities starting in April. We know that these are often the highlight of a student's overseas experience; however, safety and the mitigation of risk associated with traveling to and hosting those events warranted their cancellation.

Additionally we are reviewing all employee TDY and events that bring large groups of employees together so we can reduce the opportunity for the spread of illness within our student and employee populations.

All students, their families, and our employees are advised to follow and adhere to the travel restrictions current in place within the command and recommended by the CDC and the State Department. A list of countries where community spread of COVID-19 is occurring can be found on the CDC webpage: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#)

Let me assure you that the health and well-being of our students is our top priority and we are doing everything possible to address the situation. Anyone contracting a respiratory illness shouldn't assume novel coronavirus; it is far more likely to be a more common cold or other illness. Students and employees should stay home if they are sick and seek medical attention if needed. Remember to call the MTF before visiting for advice on how best to access care and help. My purpose in sharing this information with you today is not to cause alarm, but rather to share with you what we are doing to keep our schools prepared, tips to staying healthy, and the current status of school closures and cancellations across the Pacific.

Know that our Administrators, teachers and support staff work diligently to keep your children safe at school. Every day we make a commitment to stay focused on teaching and learning in a secure instructional environment; however, know that we are prepared for the unexpected.

As always, we will keep you informed on any new information that comes our way using the web, our social media pages, and command information venues. If you have any concerns, feel free to contact your child's teacher, the school counselors, or administrative staff.

Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.



Ms. Lois J. Rapp
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