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Human Resources

Dear Newhall School District Families,

We are sending you this update to assure you that we continue to be in close contact with the Department of Public Health – and the LA county office of Education - as we respond to news about the Coronavirus. Yesterday the County of Los Angeles and the State of California declared a “Public Health Emergency”. This declaration is a legal procedure that enables government officials to access additional resources while encouraging close coordination of key agencies in their work to address the health emergency. This act reinforces the message that community leaders are taking the appropriate steps to minimize the spread of disease in order to keep people healthy and safe.

### **EDUCATION**

One of the best ways to dispel unnecessary panic about this public health issue is to educate ourselves about the Coronavirus and what steps we can take to mitigate its impact. Three outstanding recommendations include the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, and the Department of Public Health. For information specifically related to our schools, we encourage you to visit our District’s website, which is being continuously updated with new information related to this emerging issue.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/#>

<https://www.hartdistrict.org/apps/pages/coronavirus>

### **PREVENTION / PREPARATION**

In light of the declaration of a public health emergency, many have asked if we are taking any additional steps to respond to the Coronavirus. Wednesday of this past week representatives from our valley’s school districts met to compare notes, to ensure consistency in our prevention efforts, and to coordinate communications with our shared families. Each District has begun planning for how we can continue instruction in the event that the Health Department recommends a temporary closure of school sites. All have reinforced directives to ensure routine and thorough cleaning procedures are carried out. All have committed to encouraging our students and staff to practice good hygiene as a means to limit the spread of disease:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Health officials have added additional proactive steps that can enhance our community’s ability to meet this challenge. Individuals are encouraged to get the flu vaccine if they have not already done so. Being protected against the flu will decrease the number of people using healthcare resources and allow resources to be available for people who may need them for the Coronavirus. Practicing simple strategies that limit our exposure to others who may be ill (such as verbal salutations in place of handshakes and hugs) can also make a difference in limiting the spread of disease.

Many people have asked whether schools will be cancelling group functions. It is important to note that as of the date of this communication, there are no known instances of individuals ill with the Coronavirus in the Santa Clarita Valley. Accordingly, there is currently no recommendation from public health officials to limit or cancel public or large-scale events. The Health Department continues to advise us on this emerging issue and will inform us if there is a need to temporarily consider a change in plans.

Public Health Officials are not currently recommending school closures. However, in an abundance of caution all school districts in the Santa Clarita Valley are currently preparing for the possibility of temporary school closures. Parents are encouraged to begin making plans for the possible need to supervise children in the event of a dismissal or closure.

### **COMMUNICATION**

The School District leadership in the Santa Clarita Valley have taken proactive steps to streamline and coordinate

communications. All Districts will work to communicate quickly and efficiently with parents about any significant turn of events related to the coronavirus. Parents should expect messages about major changes to come from our Black-Board Connect communication system. – which will also be posted immediately on our website.

One final note . . .

While the Coronavirus Public Health emergency should raise our level of concern and preparation, it should not be an excuse for us to surrender to an irrational fear that manifests itself in hurtful or discriminatory practices toward members of our own community. We encourage you to talk within your families about avoiding words or actions that unnecessarily target certain groups based upon fear of the unknown. It wasn't that long ago that we all experienced a remarkable outpouring of kindness and concern in the wake of an unprecedented tragedy in the Hart School District. Let us all commit to maintaining that uncommon level of respect toward one another. This is a challenge that we are equipped to conquer together.

Sincerely,

Jeff Pelzel, Superintendent of Schools