A Message from the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mark Scott

Dear Parents,

During cold and flu season, and amid growing concern of Coronavirus COVID-19, I want to share what our district does to protect our students and staff. Safety is our number one priority, and we are committed to providing a safe and healthy learning environment throughout the school year. This letter informs you about the preventive and preparedness steps we take, to include close communication with health officials and our protocols, which have been developed in partnership with health officials. Helpful resources are also provided at the end.

As the superintendent of schools, I serve on the Houston County Health Department Board of Health, which ensures we stay up-to-date on health issues that could impact our schools and community. Board of Health members collaborate to keep citizens healthy and to have a coordinated response to any health crisis. Our district employs eight nurses and 36 health technicians, to include a Coordinator of Health Related Services, a registered nurse, who oversees:

- monitoring illnesses among students and staff;
- training health related staff members;
- use of leading prevention measures; and
- staying informed about the latest clinical information.

We work closely with state, regional and local health officials regarding any health concern. Consistently, we stay in close communication as we monitor and prepare for the potential of illnesses, to include COVID-19. During frequent meetings with health officials from the Houston County Health Department (HCHD) and North Central Health District (NCHD), we are staying current on the latest COVID-19 developments. The NCHD has reviewed our protocols to prevent and manage illnesses such as an outbreak of respiratory and viral illnesses. Our measures to prevent the spread of germs are based on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations and include:

- teaching students good handwashing techniques, to wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or the time it takes to sing the happy birthday song;
- reminding students and staff of proper respiratory etiquette, to cough or sneeze into their elbow, or to use a tissue and place immediately in the trash;
- teaching students to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth;
- staying home when sick until fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours;
- avoiding close contact with people who are sick; and
- encouraging to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces – to include coats and backpacks.
The CDC reports that an annual flu vaccination is the best method to prevent flu. Our district has partnered with the HCHD for 11 years to give free flu vaccines at school to our students and employees. This past fall alone, 4,619 vaccinations were administered to students and staff.

Our school custodians disinfect high-touch areas, such as entrance doors, doorknobs, countertops, and light switches. Restrooms are disinfected daily and deep cleaned at night. Every bathroom has soap, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available in our facilities across the district. Lunchrooms and classrooms are cleaned daily, and disinfected immediately when needed.

Our district will continue to monitor and follow information and guidelines for schools from the Center for Disease Control, the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Georgia Department of Education. Our focus is on prevention, response, and preparedness. Our goal is to keep our students safe by being prepared and ready to respond appropriately. For more information, resources are provided below. Thank you for your help in reinforcing CDC guidelines at home and your support as we all work together to keep our students safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Scott, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools, Houston County School District

Resources and Health Partners

- [CDC, Stop the Spread of Germs](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [CDC Hand Washing Cartoon Video for Children](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [CDC “What You Need to Know about Hand Washing” Video](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [CDC Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Coronavirus Disease 2019](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [Georgia Department of Education, Coronavirus/COVID-19 and Schools](https://www.gadoe.org)
- [North Central Health District](https://www.nchd.org)
- [Houston Emergency Management Agency](https://www.houstonemag.com)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health](https://www.dph.georgia.gov)