



# COVID-19 SPECIAL ADVISORY

MARCH 12, 2020

## COVID-19 FACTS

- COVID-19 – abbreviated from “coronavirus disease 2019” – is a respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus. [Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses](#) that usually cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illnesses.
- [Experts currently believe](#) the illness is passed between people who are in close contact with each other (six feet or less) and/or through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — [seem to be at a higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness](#).
- On March 11, the World Health Organization [characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic](#).
- As of the afternoon of March 11, [COVID-19 has sickened nearly 125,000 people worldwide](#) and about 1,100 in the United States.

## Providing for Our Most Vulnerable: Key Questions for Planning

- The [CDC has identified](#) older adults and those with serious chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lung disease as particularly susceptible to serious illness because of COVID-19. How are you providing for the safety of students with serious health conditions and staff who meet one or more of these criteria?
- If your district or network has an extended closure, how will you provide for those students who rely on access to meals at your school?
- If your school pursues distance learning during the pandemic, how will you ensure equitable access to learning? Do you have plans to ensure all students have access to needed technology and the Internet?
- How are you providing support to students and staff who may experience anxiety and other mental health symptoms as a result of COVID-19?

The [Spire Leadership Group](#) is sharing COVID-19 bulletins for K-12 educators throughout the coronavirus pandemic. If this advisory was forwarded to you, and you wish to receive it in your inbox, **please email the word “SUBSCRIBE”** to [tim@spireleadershipgroup.com](mailto:tim@spireleadershipgroup.com).

This document is intended to provide resources to school, district, and charter network leaders regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. For authoritative information on COVID-19, consult information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), your state health department, and your school physician.

**See next page for guidance on distance learning.**

***“You have to start taking seriously what you can do now (for) if and when the infections come, and they will come.”***

Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, speaking at the White House on March 10



The [Spire Leadership Group](#) is an education-focused consulting firm based in Philadelphia. Spire Leadership is led by founder and president Tim Matheny, who previously served as a high school principal, the New Jersey Department of Education’s Chief Intervention Officer, and the founding Executive Director of the Philadelphia Academy of School Leaders. Spire’s team includes Consulting Associate April Gonzalez, a veteran principal, assistant principal, and curriculum supervisor. Together Tim and April have more than 60 years of experience as educators and leaders. [Spire Leadership](#) can meet your strategic planning, professional development, and emergency preparedness needs. For more information, please email Tim ([tim@spireleadershipgroup.com](mailto:tim@spireleadershipgroup.com)) or call 732-309-2296.

## DISTANCE LEARNING DAYS

### Providing for Continuity of Education During an Extended Closure

#### CONSIDERATIONS

- How will your district/school identify students who need a digital device and/or do not have access to the internet? Do you have a plan for accommodating these students during distance learning?
- How will students access learning remotely? District/school website, Google Classroom, Weebly, Class Dojo, printed text? What professional development do teachers need to maximize the use of these tools?
- What guidelines and time will faculty need to design and develop plans for distance learning? Do those guidelines include. . .
  - A length of time that students should be engaged in individual lessons -- and overall -- during a day of distance learning?
  - Provisions for how teachers will communicate with families? Will the teacher communicate directly with the student, with both parent and student, or only the parent?
- Have you identified approaches to “taking attendance” when students are involved in distance learning?
- Have you created preliminary guidelines for teacher responsibilities during distance learning? Have you drafted clear expectations for roles of all staff who might be involved in distance learning?
- Have you developed partnerships with local libraries and/or other spaces that could provide Internet/WiFi access to support families? Will you provide mobile hotspots to families who need Internet access?
- Will you provide IT support to teachers and families during distance learning?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Approach

- Distance learning can occur using online or print-based materials, and these do not have to be mutually exclusive.
- Materials (print-based, shared documents, web-based learning) can vary based on grade level and can be used in combination.
- Content can be thematic or subject-specific for pre-K-elementary grades and subject-specific for middle and high school students.
- As teachers develop plans for distance learning, content should not be specific to a particular element of a curricular scope and sequence because closures can be unpredictable. Planning should focus on activities that pertain to the important curricular outcomes, but can be used whenever needed.
- Lessons should be aligned to standards, serve as an extension of existing curricula, and provide opportunities for robust learning.
- Teachers should differentiate content based on students’ needs and consider 504, IEP, English learning, enrichment, and advanced learning needs.
- Administrators should communicate regularly with all key stakeholders when planning for distance learning. Collaboration is essential to create sound plans for such a complex undertaking.

##### Learning Resources

- As much as possible, the resources needed for learning should be limited to only those that are essential to the daily plans. For example, several attachments/texts/websites may be difficult to navigate, especially in environments that may be technologically-limited.
- It is recommended that online resources are used with care. Trusted sites and online programs that students and families have familiarity with will be most effective.

You can view an informative March 10 PBS NewsHour interview of Michelle Reid, Superintendent of the Northshore (WA) School District [here](#). Northshore is one of the first and largest districts in the nation to pursue distance learning for an extended period of time as a result of COVID-19.