Dear Meridian Family,

Regarding coronavirus, I want to assure you that our school district is keeping track of this situation through proven and trustworthy sources: our local health department, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These health officials believe the risk to our school community is low at this time.

Updated information from the CDC on coronavirus in the United States can be found at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html. The most recent information about coronavirus in Texas may be found at: https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

The 2019 novel coronavirus is believed to be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, much in the way the flu and other respiratory viruses are spread. Symptoms can be fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. At this time, persons considered most at risk are those who have traveled to China, or those in close contact with persons infected with novel coronavirus.

Much is being learned about this newly emerged virus. Based on the current information, health officials are recommending local communities and schools should take the same steps to protect against coronavirus as we take to prevent the spread of everyday illnesses like the common cold or the flu.

For K-12 schools, health officials are stressing the importance of proper handwashing over all other preventative measures. For this reason, Meridian's nurses will visit with all primary classes to review and demonstrate handwashing procedures. For secondary students, this training will take place during PE, advisory, and science classes. When possible, the information will be shared in a way that links to a subject matter. Nurses will also discuss the importance of using hands-free greetings rather than handshaking or hugging. Secondary classes will switch to a paper system for hall passes rather than the current plastic passes.

While a new type of illness can be scary, we can protect our students, teachers, and the broader community by using everyday actions that protect people from other types of respiratory viruses. Our teachers, school nurses, and staff are working carefully to encourage these simple and effective habits of frequent handwashing, covering every cough or sneeze, and cleaning classroom tables/surfaces frequently. This is important not just to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, but to help prevent the spread of other infections that can lead to student illness and absences.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Rick Fernández
Head of School

March 4, 2020