



March 3, 2020

Dear Grace Community:

As you all know, the news in recent weeks has been dominated by stories about the coronavirus (COVID-19). As of March 2, 2020, there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Maryland, Virginia or the District of Columbia. [Montgomery County](#) health officials, along with emergency management officials, are working closely with [State](#) and [Federal](#) health officials to respond and plan should the situation change.

In the meantime, the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) reports that the best approach to avoiding communicable diseases such as COVID-19 is **prevention**. To that end, we continue to remind our students to wash their hands thoroughly, to cough or sneeze into their elbows or shoulders, and to avoid touching their faces. In addition, all classrooms are cleaned daily and all are well-equipped with hand sanitizer and tissues. All faculty and staff members have access to disinfectant cleaners.

With Spring Break a few weeks away, we are aware that families may have travel plans. We ask that you approach this travel with a community-based and thoughtful mindset informed by guidance from the CDC and State Department.

Grace will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates via email as new information is available. **If necessary, we will use our text messaging service. If you have had a change in contact information, particularly cell phone number, please contact Noelle McHugh, nmchugh@geds.org.**

If your student expresses concern, Dr. Isabelle Blackwood-Ellis, our interim school counselor suggests framing the discussion with the following information:

- Not many people have gotten the virus
- There are many adults from around the world working on it
- Washing hands and covering your mouth to cough or sneeze will help stop the spread

- We are here to talk to any child who feels concerned

Here are additional links on ways to talk with children about COVID-19:

[Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)

[How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus](#)

We encourage you to limit your child's exposure to media right now if possible. While there is plenty of good information for us to all consume and process as adults, it can be overwhelming for children to process what they are hearing.

Finally, we know this is an added stress in what can feel like a relentlessly chaotic world. Please know that we hope Grace can be a source of comfort and calm as we all stretch to warmer and longer days and the other side of this unfolding situation. Come to Chapel and Assembly and know that our doors are open if you need a check-in!

Jen Danish