



March 11, 2020

Dear Rivermont Friends and Families,

Today the WHO declared the COVID-19 coronavirus a global pandemic. In this letter, I will be addressing several critical issues surrounding the outbreak and how we can work through this together. Diversity is our strength, and we're fortunate to enjoy tremendous cultural, ethnic, and developmental (age) diversity in our little global village. Those same strengths create a unique set of challenges, as we navigate the coronavirus outbreak. Nevertheless, I'm confident that Rivermont is well-positioned to coordinate with health authorities and handle situations as they evolve.

There's no need to panic, Rivermont Collegiate has been proactively seeking information and preparing to make decisions at a variety of levels. We've been corresponding with and seeking information from The Center for Disease Control, The World Health Organization, The Scott County Health Department, The Iowa Department of Education, The Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency, The Independent Schools Association of the Central States, peer schools, and The Association of Boarding Schools. The school will continue to monitor and follow recommendations issued by the [WHO](#), [CDC](#), and [local health authorities](#). While we are responding with as much information as possible, there are still many unknowns. We recommend that each family stay aware of statements, warnings, and recommendations issued by health authorities, as well as Rivermont.

Before outlining the schools' positions and plans, I'd like to take a moment to call your attention to students' psychological and emotional responses to this outbreak. Whether your child is in Kindergarten or 12th-Grade, the news and media associated with COVID-19 are scary. Regardless of their age, they lack the perspective that comes with age and, as a result, may perceive things in unhealthy ways. Children's responses may take the form of dismissal, anxiety, etc. From a practical standpoint, the most important things we can do to help our children are simple:

- 1) Reassure and help contextualize information, thereby facilitating healthy and accurate perspectives. Communicating with children in an affirming, truthful, and fact-based manner helps to deescalate fears and worries. Ask your kids to "look for the helpers," as Mr. Fred Rogers and his mother would have us do. Amidst all the anxiety and unknowns, there are heroes and helpers. Such duality is the very nature of our world, and fixating on the darkness or light, at the exclusion of the other, breeds ignorance.
- 2) Reinforce the most effective preventative measures: wash hands regularly and thoroughly, avoid touching our faces, eyes, etc. (this includes nose-picking!), maintain social distance, avoid unnecessary exposure.

At this time, we do not anticipate closing school. However, we are planning for partial or total closure, whether temporary or longer-term, in the event it becomes necessary. Know that we will be flexible in the event that students are unable to return or if self-quarantine becomes necessary. We also ask you to work flexibly with the school as things unfold during the coming weeks.

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In our commitment to proceeding with as much information as possible, we respectfully ask all of our community members to comply with the following requirements:

- 1) All families (faculty, staff, and students) are required to complete a travel and health symptoms questionnaire, which they will receive via the email address on file, during the second week of Spring Vacation. When it becomes available, we will use our automated text service, as well as email, to notify people.
- 2) All families must submit their family's questionnaire to the school the weekend BEFORE returning. If self-quarantine is required or advised based on your questionnaire responses, a school official will contact the student's parents.
- 3) Students without a completed travel form will not be allowed on campus until the school has received and reviewed the survey.
- 4) Depending on the circumstances after vacation, Rivermont may screen students upon return to campus. If they are symptomatic [Primarily fever, cough, respiratory difficulty), the school may require a period of self-quarantine.
- 5) If a student or member of their household becomes symptomatic, we ask that families notify the school immediately. In the event a dorm student becomes symptomatic, the school has pre-determined locations for safe quarantine quarters, including both on and off-campus locations.
- 6) Anyone that tests positive for the coronavirus will not be allowed to return to campus without written clearance from a medical doctor.
- 7) Middle school morning meetings will likely be moved to the Gym to facilitate better social distancing. The school will continue to review other student gatherings/events and will evaluate whether it's necessary to make similar adjustments.
- 8) Although our primary concern is infection/transfer upon return from vacation, we will be deep cleaning the school during the break.
- 9) At this time, the school has ample disinfectant, and other necessary supplies. Additionally, we provide all teachers and dorm personnel with disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer, for frequent use, for the remainder of the school year.

In accordance with CDC recommendations, we encourage our families to maintain an emergency supply of food, water, and other necessary items, in the event self-quarantine becomes essential for your family.

Additionally, please take some time to read and revisit the resources linked below in the coming weeks.

Thank you for entrusting your children to Rivermont. We strive to create a safe, healthy, and stimulating environment, and we take our responsibility very seriously. Your confidence and trust honor us. Finally, I wish you all a very safe, joy-filled, and restful Spring Break!

Sincerely,  
Max

C. Max Roach  
Headmaster