

# South Kitsap schools keeping a close watch on coronavirus

No schools have been closed due to outbreak

By Bob Smith

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PORT ORCHARD — The rapidly spreading coronavirus — also known as COVID-19 — and six deaths that have been reported in King and Snohomish counties in Washington state as of Monday have prompted some Puget Sound-area school districts to close schools for cleaning and as a precaution, while scientists and government officials continue to analyze

incoming data concerning this significant medical outbreak.

In Kitsap County, Kitsap Public Health District released information Monday to community members on the steps they need to take to protect their health and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The steps include those normally taken to avoid respiratory illnesses similar to coronavirus, such as washing hands frequently, avoiding touching the face and staying home if sick.

South Kitsap School District officials sent out a communication to families of students and staff members on Friday, Feb. 18 that outlines precautionary steps students and staff need to take. Amy Miller, the SKSD spokeswoman, said the district is working closely with Kitsap Public Health District to keep abreast of the latest developments. Miller said the school district so far hasn't seen a need to close any of its schools as a precaution.

Here is the letter SKSD sent to its community members Feb. 18:

*Dear South Kitsap School District families,*

*As you are likely aware, many parts of the world are experiencing an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus called COVID-19. Naturally, it is normal to be concerned when we hear about health-related events like this. Please be assured that the health and safety of students and staff is always our top priority.*

*South Kitsap School District administrators work closely with Kitsap Public Health District and the Washington State Department of Health on matters of health and safety. According to these agencies, the health risk for COVID-19 to*

*the general public in the US and Washington is considered low. The DOH has not advised schools to take any special precautions beyond what is normally recommended to prevent the spread of viruses in schools.*

*Even though the risk is low, South Kitsap School District facilities and custodial staff continue to use best practices for cleaning and sanitizing school buildings and buses. They have also employed the use of some extra disinfecting equipment. Our nursing staff will monitor illnesses at schools and consult with Kitsap Public Health if they observe symptoms or circumstances that seem to match those related to COVID-19.*

*Please use information from official public health agencies as trusted sources of information, including Kitsap Public Health District. Here are some general tips to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, such as novel coronavirus:*

- Wash your hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub.*
- Stay home if you are sick. • Avoid other people who are sick.*
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your sleeve.*
- Parents are reminded to consult their physician if they have any concerns.*

*As per standard school practice, school staff are encouraged to be vigilant for students who are sick and to report any concerns to the principal. As always, students who are sick should remain home and families should consult with their health care provider. We will share any new information from public health agencies with families. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your health care provider directly or contact Kitsap Public Health District.*

*Sincerely,*

*Tim Winter*

*Superintendent*

*South Kitsap School District*

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