

Dear Educator,

As you know, the situation surrounding coronavirus is very fluid and continues to evolve. There is a lot of uncertainty facing us, not just as educators, but as the people and families who are living with this outbreak. Please know that your health, and that of your families, loved ones, students, colleagues, and communities remains of utmost importance.

I want to share what PAT is doing to support our members, and answer some questions we have been receiving. In a nutshell, we are fighting to slow down the spread of COVID-19, to make sure our students' needs for food and basic services are met, that graduation can still happen, and we are coordinating with others to safeguard individuals and communities across our city.

First of all, PAT remains in close communication with PPS regarding the virus and schools, we have also been communicating with our nutrition service workers and custodial staff. We meet and discuss issues daily. At this point, it is PAT's position that it's not a matter of if, but when, schools will close. **We are advocating that notice goes out today, for a date in the future that gives us and our families an opportunity to prepare.** The decision to advocate for closing schools does not come lightly to us. [Here is just one of many articles that leads us to believe it's our social imperative to practice greater social distancing.](#) It states:

Public officials understandably don't want to close schools unless they absolutely have to, and many closures so far have been

triggered by a known case of infection or exposure among staff or students. Yet research suggests the best time to close schools is before that happens.

"If you wait for the case to occur [in your school], you still have wound up closing the school, but now you've missed the opportunity to have the real benefit that would have accrued had you closed the school earlier," says Yale University sociologist and physician Nicholas Christakis.

The Governor today directed school districts in Oregon to stay open, but also to avoid crowds of 250. We know this is incongruous. We believe that we must be prepared for school closures in the coming days. PAT will continue to advocate with and for you and your students, in all areas.

Our contract has some language about this already, but of course this is an unprecedented time. We aim to be collaborative, flexible, and helpful-while always prioritizing health and safety.

17.2.4 Absence Due to Quarantine: In the event a declaration of quarantine made by the Public Health Official prevents a professional educator who is not ill from reporting to work, the professional educator shall not suffer a loss in pay and no charge will be made against the professional educator's accumulated sick leave.

In the event of a prolonged school closure, PAT will work with the district to make sure that benefits are not interrupted, and to negotiate any plan to make up days.

We know that this pandemic is stressful, due to the many uncertainties and questions it raises.

We know that there have been concerns about what PPS has communicated with custodians about “enhanced cleaning.” We pressed the district to clarify the plan about disinfecting high-touch areas. On March 9, Frank Leavitt, the Director of Facilities, communicated the following to all custodians. See the full communication, and the Memorandum that went to Head Custodians on March 4 [here](#).

There has been some confusion on ‘who’ is responsible for ‘what’ in regards to cleaning and disinfecting classrooms. While the teaching staff’s main priorities and goals are the education of the students, the Custodial staff’s main priorities are the cleanliness and safety of the building and its occupants... both during the day and at night.

To that end, the custodial staff should be prioritizing the disinfecting of the ‘touch points’ noted in the memo below and attached. Part of that goal is the cleanliness of rooms and the desks, floors, etc. within the rooms. The evening staff should be focusing on disinfecting the classroom desks and touchpoints within the classroom in the evening. We know this will take time away from other, much needed work, however, this must become a priority so that when students return to school in the morning, they will arrive to clean desks.

Senior leadership has reminded principals and teachers that we need their help in keeping the desks clean during the day with disinfecting wipes, which many schools have already received (they continue to be delivered to schools as they arrive in the Warehouse) and that they may use the Alpha-HP in the morning (per instructions) again before students arrive. We understand that the day custodian cannot be in each room doing this during the day.

We have also communicated to principals that, due to the added duties for the night crew, there may be a dip in service of some

regular tasks. Please be sure to keep in communication with your principals and your FOM of areas that may have been missed and work with your FOM on how we may return to those items with the day custodian's help.

We will continue to give you updates as we know more, and will continue to advocate. In the meantime, please contact the Board and the Superintendent with your concerns, and stay home if you are sick.

Portland Association of Teachers

<http://www.pdxteachers.org/>

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