



American International School of Zagreb

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Director's Update **March 13, 2020**

Today has been a busy day setting up our Virtual Learning Environment. I was very pleased and impressed by our students and staff all of who embraced this new learning environment. I regret that I have not had time to respond to some emails today, but I hope the information sent by us all today addresses your questions.

On Thursday, March 12th, we made the decision to close the school on Monday March 16th 2020.

Our decision was based on closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in the whole region, Croatia's neighboring countries and data available through different governmental health agencies. In all our actions, from cancelling CEESA activities and school trips, practicing Virtual Learning, cancelling international travel and teacher professional development we managed to stay one step ahead and make some very timely decisions, so when we were finally impacted we were prepared. I want to acknowledge the outstanding support we have had from the Regional Epidemiologist, members of the Croatian Public Health community, our school board, our AISZ Crisis Response team and the US Embassy. Frequent and comprehensive information sharing has allowed us to venture into this next phase fully prepared.

As I informed you yesterday we had made preparations to close on Monday, but a phone call from a parent confirming a case of COVID-19 was the trigger to implement our plans a day early. We immediately made contact with the Regional Epidemiologist and were instructed that since none of the other family members showed symptoms there was no requirement for any other people to be tested nor even any requirement to close the school. However, as we had already had the plans in place, AISZ leadership decided the best proactive measure would be to close the school a day early. In both the cases - close contact and the confirmed case - the families acted immediately to contact the school and we immediately contacted the authorities and followed their recommendations. I want to thank both families for acting with a sense of community responsibility and general health awareness which allowed us to act in a timely and appropriate manner. Now we have closed, there is no necessity to inform the school if other cases are confirmed during closure - it is best to deal directly with the Regional Epidemiologist. It is still of value for us to know, however, it is not necessary, as it is private medical information during this period.

I want to thank all of our community who followed the directions to collect resources during the day. Although we have set an opening target date, the situation is fluid and this date may change according to circumstances. I will communicate this to you as we review it.

While you are at home it is important to monitor your child's wellbeing and useful information on talking to your child is [here for you](#) and in the counselling section of the Bear Print. I will also share this excellent [video](#) explaining the coronavirus with our upper school students. In the email I send to students I will seek from them compassion, understanding and empathy for those who may become sick or those who know people who are. Last week I discussed coronaracism, and this week it will be about education and compassion for those who may be afflicted in the days to come. Being strong enough to refrain from *coronabullying* or any other type of online meanness.

Thank you for your continued support and we will do our very best to support you in this time.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Buckley.

Information From Doctor Romana Chevrier:

COVID-19 is a new virus for humans, belonging to corona family viruses which can cause common cold. As it is a new virus we are still learning about it; how does it spread, the time it needs to cause the symptoms and the gravity of the illness it can cause.

The virus is causing respiratory tract infection in many ways similar to flu, with one or more of the following symptoms; fever, sore muscles, cough, shortness of breath.

The COVID 19 is spreading mainly from person-to-person as other respiratory infections, by droplets produced when a sick person coughs or sneezes and when the people are in close contact. The droplets containing the virus can then cause the healthy person to become sick.

Sick people are becoming contagious when they are symptomatic – meaning they exhibit respiratory disease symptoms.

There is some data indicating that people might be sick, but without obvious respiratory symptoms, but this is not thought to be the main way that COVID 19 spreads.

It is also possible that a person can get COVID-19 infection by touching a virus contaminated surface or objects and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

As this is a new virus to the humans, we do not have any immunity to it.

Once COVID 19 enters the population, it spreads easily from person to person, making sick a lot of people at the same time and causing severe illness in vulnerable persons. This is why the countries were implementing different epidemiologic measures to contain/slow down the spreading of the virus so the health system would not become overwhelmed by ill people in short time.

This is why countries are trying to register, trace and quarantine (isolate) all travelers coming from affected areas and bringing COVID 19 infection to a new area. Community spread means that the infection is spreading within an area (community), without traceability, spreading fast from person to person without knowing when and how they became infected.

Relying on the facts about this new infection and our cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

To be able to slow down the propagation of COVID 19 infection we urge our community to **strictly follow** the recommended protocols during this time.

Please keep in mind that the best way to stay healthy and to slow down the spread of COVID-19 are **prevention measures that are the same for any respiratory illness.**

- **Restrict travelling.**
If you are obliged to travel, when coming back report to a border customs.
- **Avoid crowded places and when in public keep a distance from other people.**
Stay at home if you become sick. Contact your general practitioner, designated epidemiologist or call 112 for assistance. This way you will help prevent others from becoming sick.
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Stick to cough etiquette.**
Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth, dispose of the tissue and wash your hands. When a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.

Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you can't wash your hands, use alcohol-based (with at least 65% alcohol) sanitizer.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects at home or work, especially when someone is ill.

If you suspect that you are infected with COVID-19 or you were confirmed to be positive, take the following steps to help prevent the disease from spreading within your home and community;

- Stay home
- To seek medical help please call your GP or designated epidemiologist (098 227753) or call 112.
- Do not go to the hospital or GP Office, call first!
- For the time being all COVID19 confirmed cases are hospitalized but this might change with the increasing number of infected people.
- Patients with mild cases of COVID 19 should be isolated at home.
- At home:
 - Separate yourself from other people in your home.
 - Stay in a specific room and away from other family members. If available use a separate bathroom.
 - Avoid contact with pets. It is recommended that COVID 19 infected people avoid contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.
 - The person who is sick **should wear a facemask** when around other people.
 - If the sick person is not able to wear the mask (because of breathing difficulties) then the person caring for the sick should wear a mask.
 - Stick to cough etiquette when coughing or sneezing.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, dispose of used tissues immediately and wash your hands with a soap and water or use alcohol based (containing at least 65% alcohol) hand sanitizer.
 - Do not share dishes, silverware, towels or bedding.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces and objects.

- **HELPFUL LINKS**

- **Croatian Institute for Public Health**
- **Rockefeller Street 7, 10 000, Zagreb**
- **Tel: + 385 1 4693 004**

Cell Phone: 098 227 753 / 091 468 30 32 / 099 468 30 31

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- <https://www.hzjz.hr/>
- epidemiologija@hzjz.hr

International & Regional Information

- [Croatian Institute for Public Health Latest Info](#)
- [Additional containment measures for COVID 19 in Croatia](#)
- [Croatian Institute for Public Health COVID 19 Q & A](#)
- [Croatian Institute for Public Health Travelers Recommendations English](#)

- [Croatian Institute for Public Health Travelers Recommendations Chinese](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention Global Update](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Update](#)