

Dear ASD Students, Parents, Teachers, and Community

During the past two days we have been inundated with a whirlwind of news updates and growing concerns with regards to COVID-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a statement that because of [“alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction.”](#) the WHO now considers Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-2019, 2019-nCoV) to be a pandemic. Last evening, USA President Trump announced the closing of US borders to Europe for at least a month (with the exclusion of the United Kingdom), the details of which will be made clear over the next day or two.

At ASD, our primary concern is always student safety. We recognize that most of you likely have your own sources of information, and some sources have varying opinions on the severity and spread of COVID-19. We have promised to be vigilant and transparent in our research and to always act in the best interests of our community. It is important to note: **As yet, we do not have a single confirmed case of Coronavirus in our immediate community.**

That being said, we are all becoming familiar with the term “social distancing” and the need for us to take steps in the interests of protecting ourselves and others. Some of these steps we shared with you earlier and have been in place for several weeks on our campus and will continue for the time being. However, recent developments have compelled us to make additional safeguards. The situation around the world, and one that will inevitably evolve in Mexico, is too fluid and potentially dangerous to ignore.

Late last night, I made the decision to unilaterally cancel all current and future school-sponsored travel by ASD teachers and students for the indefinite future. We had trips planned for as soon as tomorrow for professional development and team tournaments, and more in the weeks ahead. We are obviously all disappointed at the lost opportunities for the social and academic growth of our staff and students, who organize and look forward to participating in events and activities. For now, practices and after-school activities will continue at ASD, but there will not be any outside tournaments or travel for teams, clubs, or field trips.

Furthermore, the ASOMEX Directors reached the decision that all ASOMEX events (sporting events, cultural gatherings, meetings) from today until the end of the school year are cancelled. Again, I sympathize with the disappointment this will bring to our athletes, artists, teachers and administrators and the financial loss to families who have already purchased tickets and booked rooms. We would love to see the fruits of our students' hard work shared with our larger ASOMEX community, but this, too, is a necessary step.

You have likely read that many schools around the world, and many university campuses in the USA, have opted to suspend classes and have students study from home via Distance Learning, or remote learning. While I understand that some within the community believe that we should immediately suspend classes on the ASD campus, this is a decision which will only be taken in consultation with the authorities. As there is not an immediate danger within our community, we will continue to operate all classes at regular hours of instruction.

However, we have required all teachers to ensure they are prepared for the possibility of Distance Learning. All students from grades 5-12 are enrolled in Google Classroom and can interact with their teachers via Google Classroom should the need arise. In the Pre-Escolar and Elementary grades 1-4, all teachers have the ability to communicate directly with parents for homework, assignments, etc. I am in the process of reviewing and writing a formal policy that

will guide us should the need arise to move to Distance Learning. While not the ideal learning environment, I have experienced it personally while working in Pakistan and Kuwait, and have had my own children learn in a remote environment. I fully recognize the challenges this could pose for our community, but we must always act in the best interests of our health and safety.

You will hear from us again over the next few days and we appreciate your patience as we navigate a landscape which is changing almost hourly. We need to be patient and flexible, yet, we must also be decisive and pro-active. Along with the ASOMEX Directors and Regional Directors, I am in contact with health officials who are constantly providing updates and guidance on the best course of action for schools and communities. We are also posting information on our website that is consistent with guidelines from the Government of Mexico and international organizations.

As adults, we have a tremendous responsibility to provide children with clear, age-appropriate information. Part of that responsibility includes keeping others safe from potential sickness by keeping children with high fevers or symptoms of the flu at home. It is also highly advised at this time, to keep siblings of sick children at home. At ASD, our counselors are always ready to provide guidance and support for children who may find these times challenging to comprehend.

As part of our evolving policy on dealing with the Coronavirus, we need the cooperation of the entire community to ensure we are all as safe as possible. Obviously, some of these guidelines will make life difficult, but we must act collectively to ensure the safety of everyone. Please follow these guidelines:

- Parents and students who travel to other countries must self-quarantine for 10 days upon return to Mexico.
- Students of parents who have traveled to other countries must also stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days.
- Any person who shows any of the symptoms of Coronavirus must see a physician immediately, and if necessary take any tests for Coronavirus.
- Any person who tests positive for Coronavirus must notify the school and stay in quarantine until cleared by a physician to return to school.
- There will be no academic penalty for students who miss class time or assignments as a result of staying home.

These are challenging times for the world and the ASD community. We will keep you informed of developments that impact our community and always act in the best interests of the children who trust us to protect them.