

Nursing Notes, Written from a Remote Outpost in Pinos Altos

Well, friends, today is officially the last day of our Spring Break. As it turned out, many of us had to forego planned trips, outings with friends, and other anticipated delights that got us through the long winter, knowing that Spring Break in all its glory would reward us. Instead, many of us spent the last week wondering and worrying—about the fate of our families and friends, our jobs, and our communities.

There's no end to gloomy updates, frightening statistics, and dire predictions, of course, and indeed I have dialed into them this week. Mostly, I've been searching for solutions to our current predicament and, like most people, finding only hints and guesses. How long will the pandemic last? Is it safe to be around people, as long as we keep 6 feet between each other? Is it risky to visit the grocery store? Which of us is most at-risk? There's no end to the questions.

As most of you know by now, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's Executive Order 2020-005 closed all public schools till April 6. There's no guarantee that we will resume classes on that date; some believe the closure will last longer. Since we are in the early days of our National Public Health Emergency, the Public Education Department has not yet made an official statement about how we will educate students for the next two months. Some Aldo staff have been scheming about how we might undertake our own online "classes" while the state continues to wrestle with many educational concerns, including how to maintain equity and provide learning support for students with special needs.

It's within the nature of the teacher-beast to think of education as indispensable, even if our students don't always concur. At the very least, we want to provide our students with school-sponsored opportunities to connect with their teachers and their classmates. No doubt some Aldo students are elated with the prospect of an escape from school routines; but others hope to complete half-finished Annual Projects (experiments, films, novels, computer programs) and pursue other learning goals—some of which are actually related to what went on in our classrooms during the last 8 months!

In sum, all of us are hoping that the pandemic ends soon, but there is little to suggest it will. Questions about how the last quarter of the school year will proceed, or whether we will be able to stage a public graduation for the Class of 2020 on May 17, remain unanswered, replaced with more immediate questions about how our young people can receive healthy food and how we can best care for our personal and our community's health.

To that end, I hope to post a brief message each week with updates on essential information related to school health—a continuation, during our time away from Ritch Hall and "Aldo East" (the middle-school building), of the notes I included in what I consider Aldo's prime "go-to" information source, the underrated and highly

recommended *Weekly Update* that Jennifer Lepisko supervises. I will endeavor to keep my messages briefer than this one; they will arrive weekly and perhaps more frequently when necessary. I won't flatter myself that they will be widely read, but for those of you who would like a brief update on how the coronavirus is affecting our school, you may look to this space.

Most likely you have already read the valuable information that school staff (thank you, Maia Chaney!) posted on the linked "Covid-19 Developments" page on the ALCS website. As a school nurse, I regard the CDC's site as my go-to source of reliable information; in addition, I rely upon information I receive from the New Mexico Department of Health and from the Governor's Office. (That doesn't mean I haven't been searching for promising news about vaccine development and antiviral therapies, but for this week's Nursing Notes, I will dwell in the realm of the known and established.)

Here are some tips from a Centers for Disease Control page titled "Children and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)," which also contains information about limiting social interactions, continuing with learning activities while out of school, and helping kids stay active.

Steps to protect children from getting sick

You can encourage your child to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by teaching them to do the same things everyone should do to stay healthy.

- **Clean hands often** using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- **Avoid people who are sick** (coughing and sneezing)
- **Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily** in household common **areas** (e.g. tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks)
- **Launder items** including washable plush toys as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people's items.

([Children and Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#))

The Aldo webpage also mentions places where you can obtain food for your children during our current economic crisis. Note that Guadalupe Montessori School (1731 North Alabama Street) will be offering tasty, nutritious Grab-&-Go meals starting tomorrow morning, March 23; the meals will be available starting at 11:30 AM. Note that Grab-&-Go is planned as a drive-through service to limit contact between meal preparers and families. If any of you are concerned about the risks involved in even this limited contact, consider this message from a public advisory originating in Governor Michell Lujan Grisham's office:

Q: Are pickup and delivery food orders safe? What if a food preparer has the virus?

A: Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19, according to the federal Food and Drug Administration. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

Finally, though some may consider current state restrictions “severe,” they may prevent us from needing to establish even stricter measures later. Here is how the New Mexico Department of Health answers the question, **“Why are gatherings of only 10 or fewer allowed?”**

A: Everything the state of New Mexico is doing to combat COVID-19 is organized around one principle: To temporarily limit person-to-person contact, particularly in large groups. This is the best way to minimize spread of COVID-19 and prevent a spike in illnesses, particularly serious illnesses in vulnerable populations. Every day state officials re-evaluate the steps already taken and survey new opportunities to strengthen our response in order to prevent illness, save lives and avoid overloading our state’s hospital system. Even 10 people in a closed space is too many if one of them carries the virus, but this number is an appropriate and aggressive baseline for mitigating the virus’ spread throughout our state. ([Social Distancing & Travel Recommendations](#))

Alas, my “Nursing Notes” are lengthy enough for now. As a parting shot, I offer links to two sites that may be of interest to the school family—the first intended for those who aren’t already bogged down trying to figure out childcare, threats to your livelihood, and how to battle cabin fever in the coming weeks. The second article outlines South Korea’s approach to the coronavirus outbreak, which differs in important ways from our own approach. It’s useful to study what others around the world are doing to remain healthy and functional. And it’s always important to leave room for hope, even as it is tempered by our current troubling reality.

“How you can help during the coronavirus outbreak” ([How you can help during the coronavirus outbreak](#))

“South Korea’s Coronavirus Lessons: Quick, Easy Tests; Monitoring” ([South Korea's coronavirus lessons: Quick, easy tests; monitoring](#))