News Release

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Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools and Buildings: What Does Clean Mean?

The coronavirus has generated both concern and awareness around good hygiene practices that help reduce the spread of potential infectious diseases like COVID-19, influenza and the common cold. In addition to frequent hand washing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that cleaning and disinfecting surfaces is an effective strategy for illness prevention.

Due to the confirmed case of COVID-19 and potential risk of others, the district wants to share its process for cleaning schools and facilities. In other words, "What does clean mean?"

Cleaning vs. Disinfecting
Technically, Fulton County Schools is doing more than just cleaning schools. The CDC defines "cleaning" as the removal of germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. This process does not kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection. "Disinfecting," however, refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces, thereby lowering the risk of spreading infection. **Fulton County Schools is following an advanced protocol that employs both strategies of cleaning and disinfecting to prevent, as well as reduce, the spread of illnesses.**

What we're doing and when
During the days that Fulton County Schools is closed this week (March 10-11), custodial crews are cleaning and disinfecting every school and administrative building. Hard surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles, light switches, tables, chairs, student/teacher desks and countertops, are first sprayed with a hospital-grade disinfectant and then wiped clean. This disinfectant is proven to kill a variety of illness-causing bacteria, viruses, mildew and fungi and is effective against coronavirus, norovirus, canine parvovirus, and blood borne pathogens.

While schools and other buildings already receive daily cleaning and disinfecting, special attention is being given to areas where students or staff commonly gather or touch. This process will be continued to limit the spread of any germ, whether it's during cold/flu season or a unique situation like the COVID-19 virus. Bear Creek Middle School and Woodland Middle School, where the infected teacher has taught, also are undergoing a specialized cleaning and disinfection effort through a contracted service provider.

School buses are using a sprayer tool, similar to a fogger, that allows the disinfectant to be quickly applied to interior surfaces such as seats, inside paneling and windows. Drivers also will manually disinfect each row and other commonly touched areas after each morning and afternoon run.

At this link you will find photos taken yesterday of cleaning efforts at schools throughout Fulton County. This type of cleaning is happening at every school in the district with the exception of Bear Creek and Woodland Middle. The process of cleaning and disinfecting is different at these locations and at this time, we do not have visuals.

What's next?
Fulton County Schools strongly encourages the community to follow the CDC's guidance to frequently and properly wash hands and to stay home if feeling ill or experiencing flu-like symptoms. The district continues to follow these CDC recommendations for the routine cleaning and disinfection of community facilities, such as schools, daycares, and businesses. Families can protect their households using similar CDC recommendations for home environments.

As a reminder, the FCS COVID-19 web page, www.fultonschools.org/coronavirus, provides information and resources as they relate to Fulton County Schools as well as an archive of previous communications and updates. This website also shares the decisions made by the FCS COVID-19 Executive Task Force, which will continue to meet daily until the coronavirus is no longer considered a significant health concern.

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