

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Novel H1N1 influenza, previously known as “swine flu,” is a virus that was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. The symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, and/or sore throat. The majority of novel H1N1 influenza cases so far have occurred in people between 5 and 24 years old, and several cases have occurred in our school settings.

Influenza spreads easily. If you suspect your child is ill and/or shows any signs of influenza noted above, **keep your child home.** If your child is diagnosed with influenza they must be out for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without fever-reducing medications. A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C. Due to the fact that pre-school children are in a higher risk group, the school exclusion for them is 7 days. If we are able to keep sick children and employees at home, we can greatly reduce the spread of influenza.

It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting influenza and protect others from infection.

- **Clean hands** frequently. Washing with hot and soapy for water for 20 seconds is ideal.
- **Use hand sanitizer** if hand washing facilities are unavailable. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes** with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- **Contact your healthcare provider** for information about the H1N1 influenza vaccine and the seasonal influenza vaccine that will be available this fall and winter.
- **Look for additional information** from the school on where your children can be vaccinated against H1N1.
- **Get your children vaccinated** with both seasonal influenza vaccine and the H1N1 influenza vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

If we all practice the above recommendations, we can limit the spread of both seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza in schools.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.