



September 11, 2009

Dear Seattle Public Schools Families,

Seattle Public Schools' goal is to provide an excellent education for every student while maintaining a safe and healthy environment in every school. As school begins, we continue to read or hear in the media that both seasonal influenza as well as cases of 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu are in our community. Our District will follow the national, state and local guidance to promote a healthy environment so that students and teachers can stay focused on excellence in education for every child. Per the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, Districts are to keep schools open to the greatest extent possible. We continue to work closely with the Public Health Department - Seattle King County to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff and the general community.

The flu virus causes symptoms such as cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and fever of 100 degrees or greater. To prevent the spread of any type of flu, here are some ways to protect your family from getting sick or spreading flu through our community:

- **If your child is sick, have them STAY AT HOME** until s/he has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. This includes staying away from school, child care or other gatherings.

- **Teach each child to:**

Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially before eating and after using the restroom. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. If soap and water are unavailable, alcohol based hand sanitizers may be used.

Stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.

When sneezing or coughing, cover their mouth and nose with tissues or sneeze/cough into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth since germs spread this way.

In our community, planning efforts continue. The District and schools are developing plans to minimize the spread of the flu virus. As part of these efforts, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has asked local governments and schools to develop plans that could also include closing schools and day cares if the flu season becomes more severe. Additionally, the Public Health Department – Seattle King County is asking each family to: 1) screen their family for flu symptoms each morning and, 2) develop a plan to keep students at home if schools are closed. This may include keeping students at home even if they show no symptoms of flu.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your health care provider. You can also get more information from the Flu Hotline at 1-877-903-KING (5464) or the Public Health Department –Seattle/King County at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/pandemicflu/swineflu.aspx>

It is very important for all of us to work together to protect the health of our students and school community.

Sincerely,

Jill Lewis, RN, MN
Student Health Services Manager