

THE OAKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY 07436
Office of the Superintendent

September 8, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Recent news media reports, as well as guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the New Jersey Departments of Education and of Health and Human Services, have cautioned us about the likelihood of an outbreak of the flu this fall. We have been advised that both seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus are possible. Proactively, our School Nurses, together with our School Physician, Dr. Chism, met this summer to discuss preventive measures that school and home should initiate to prevent flu infection among our students. Additionally, last week, the FLOW nurses met to discuss appropriate measures that each district should undertake, as well as effective communication with parents. This letter speaks to what we are doing in our schools and what we are asking you to do at home.

Our school nurses are keeping abreast of recommendations from the CDC and the State Departments assigned the responsibilities for the health and well-being of citizens. We ask you to remain current also by accessing the CDC web site at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance, or www.flu.gov. Furthermore, we are recommending that you speak with your health care provider to discuss flu prevention, as well as the availability of immunizations and the appropriateness of these for your children.

We are placing renewed emphasis in our schools on personal hygiene and preventive practices, as advised by the CDC. Please reinforce our teaching by doing the following at home with your family:

- ***Teach your children to wash their hands thoroughly and often*** with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- ***Teach your children not to share personal items*** such as drinks, water bottles, food or unwashed utensils. If there is communicable illness in your home, please do not send food from your home to school for others to eat.
- ***Teach your children to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.*** Teach your children to cover their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable. Additionally, teach your children to avoid touching their face, nose and eyes, and to properly dispose of used tissues.
- ***Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.*** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit; 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and tiredness. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- ***Keep sick children at home*** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, ***without using fever-reducing drugs.***

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• ***Do not send children to school if they are sick.*** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home*. Please know that attendance award criteria do not require 100% attendance. Also, please report your children's illnesses to the School Nurse.

Because we will be sending children home who are ill, it is imperative that parents have alternative child care arrangements in place *prior to the onset of illness*. Additionally, make certain that someone is authorized to pick your child up from school if you are at a workplace or are unavailable for any reason. **Please keep your telephone contact numbers current.**

Know that our schools will be regularly cleaned with disinfecting cleaning agents effective against the flu virus. Last week, our nurses inserviced our custodial/maintenance staff about effective cleaning schedules and practices. Regular cleaning enhances the possibility that virus germs will not survive. Additionally, be aware that we are installing hand sanitizers in the cafeterias in our schools and we will be asking students to cleanse their hands prior to and after eating. Furthermore, we are informing teachers about the CDC advice to increase social distances (the space between people) at school.

Please be aware that we have been advised that there will be separate vaccines available this fall for the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu. Seasonal flu vaccines are currently available. However, the vaccine for the H1N1 flu virus may not be available until October. The latter vaccination may require two doses with an intervening period. **Please discuss the flu vaccines with your family physician and determine whether they are appropriate for your child.**

To reduce the spread of flu germs, we are permitting students to bring bottled water to school. Please ask your children not to share their water bottles. Additionally, we will be instructing students about how to use a water fountain, if one must be used. Also, know that water fountains without sufficient water pressure will be turned off.

We will continue to remain current about recommendations from the CDC and the State agencies during this flu season, and we will communicate with our local Department of Health and our School Physician. Furthermore, we will continue to act proactively to reduce the possibility of infection. We ask you to do the same. Please support us in our efforts to protect your children even when measures may be inconvenient.

Please inform the School Nurse in your children's school of any communicable disease, and please contact them with any questions that you may have. Also, please remember to send a note to your child's teacher upon a return to school from an illness. Our School Nurses are:

Ms. Barbara Verga, R.N.- Dogwood Hill School Ms. Karen Kutlick, R.N. - Manito School
Ms. Michele Wall, R.N.- Heights School Ms. Andrea Weaver, R.N.-Valley Middle School

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and assistance as we address these issues.

Sincerely,
Dr. Richard G. Heflich
Superintendent of Schools

