



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jack D. Dale, Superintendent
8115 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

June 12, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

It is our goal to promote quality health for students in our school system and to manage communicable diseases. We have been working with the Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) to monitor student absences using the Health Department-School Illness Monitoring System (HD-SIMS). Through the use of this system, the FCHD has identified a recent rise in the number of schools with increased student absences. Upon further investigation, the FCHD has found that a number of these absences are due to influenza-like symptoms. During this time of year, it is unlikely that these symptoms are caused by the seasonal influenza that we see at other times of the year. Instead, these symptoms likely reflect the spread of the new H1N1 virus (swine flu) within our community. Although illness from this new virus is mild in most people, school staff and students should continue to take steps to limit disease spread.

Please practice these flu prevention measures to help protect your child and others.

- Monitor children for influenza-like symptoms (fever plus a cough or sore throat) and keep them at home if they exhibit these symptoms. Students with flu-like symptoms should stay at home and out of school for at least seven days, even if symptoms go away sooner. If children are still sick after the seven-day period, keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the symptoms have ceased. If children have flu-like symptoms, they should not participate in any school activities, including school age child care (SACC), or be out in the community except to seek medical care.
- If your child appears to have an influenza-like illness when he or she arrives at school, a parent or guardian will be notified and asked to pick up the child. Please ensure that your school has your contact information and that you pick up your child if you are called.
- Help your child understand the importance of covering his or her nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Also, emphasize washing hands with soap and water, especially after a cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based sanitizers are also effective when soap and water are not available. Avoid contact with those who have flu symptoms. Please model these behaviors for your child.

Since it is expected that the new H1N1 virus will continue to spread through the summer and fall, it is important to make good respiratory and hand hygiene habits part of our daily practices, even after school has ended. FCPS continues to work with the Fairfax County Health Department to monitor health conditions in the county and will use Keep in Touch (KIT) to communicate new information.

Your support in calling in student absences and specifying the type of illness has been invaluable. Thank for your continued help in our effort to reduce the spread of influenza in our school community. If you have additional questions, please contact your school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack D. Dale', written over a circular scribble.

Jack D. Dale
Superintendent of Schools

JDD/bjm