



September 8, 2009

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT**

As we begin a new school year, your child's health is our top priority. We are working closely with the Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools.

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Fairfax County Public Schools is taking steps to reduce the spread of flu. It is our goal to keep schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. But, we need your help to do this.

Here are a few things you can do to help.

Teach your children good hand hygiene etiquette. Hands should be washed frequently with soap and water, and hand washing should last for at least 20 seconds. You can set a good example by doing this yourself. If hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol are also effective.

Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.

Learn 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 feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

Keep sick children at home. Any child who is determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. It is also important to keep sick children at home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.

Plan now for your children's care if you or your children become ill with the flu and need to stay home. Talk to other family members, friends or neighbors about helping with child care or possibly sharing care in such a situation.

Stay informed. We encourage you to visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. For more information about flu in our community and what our school system is doing, visit [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu) or call your school.

We will continue to keep you updated of any additional changes to our school system's strategies to prevent the spread of flu.