

September 14, 2009

Dear Parent/Legal Guardians and School Staff:

There have been many cases of H1N1 (swine) influenza in the country and world since the outbreak was first noted in April 2009. Symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to those of seasonal influenza: fever of 100 degrees or greater, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches. Unlike seasonal flu, however, most of the confirmed cases have occurred in people between the ages of 6 months and 24 years of age. So far, H1N1 flu does not appear to be as severe as seasonal flu.

We anticipate that children and staff will continue to be exposed to and infected with H1N1 influenza during the upcoming school year. At this point, there is not enough information to predict how severe H1N1 flu will be this fall.

We have learned that information changes quickly with this outbreak. We plan to use our website <http://www.marshall.k12.wi.us/> to provide the links to the most up to date information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Public Health Madison and Dane County. We may also use email, phone messaging capabilities, and notes home to direct families to check our website for updated information or message alerts.

**When there are cases of H1N1 in school aged children, we will not be sending out school wide notification letters.**

We want to let you know what we will be doing to respond to H1N1 flu and how we will be providing information to you. The district will continue to (1) consult with and take direction from local and state public health authorities, (2) monitor student and staff absence rates, and (3) actively promote personal protective measures to prevent the spread of illness (e.g. hand washing and staying home when ill). We will be vigilant about making sure that soap, water and paper towels are available in our schools supplemented by liquid or gel hand sanitizers or hand wipes as needed.

Some people are at greater risk of complications from infection with H1N1 influenza. Those at higher risk include (1) children younger than 5 years old (especially those under age 2 years), (2) pregnant women, (3) people with chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, diseases of the blood, liver or kidney and (4) people with immune system problems. If you have specific concerns about your child's likely exposure to H1N1 influenza while attending school, please contact your health care provider for advice.

We anticipate that schools will remain open as usual when there are cases of H1N1 influenza. **The most important thing you can do is to keep your child home if he or she is ill.** To assist the school district in the monitoring of H1N1 flu or any flu-like illness we ask that you notify the school and report the symptoms your child is experiencing as well as any confirmed cases done through testing by your medical provider. If your child is so sick that you would normally seek medical care, please do so. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications (Tylenol, Ibuprofen).

We do not anticipate any recommendations for additional cleaning or disinfecting of the school environment when there are cases of H1N1 flu.

Recent national recommendations identified people aged 6 months to 24 years and pregnant women among the priority groups for vaccination against H1N1. The district will be working with public health authorities and the community to respond to this recommendation.

School and public health officials are working together to keep our children safe and healthy. Thank you for your help.



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