

September 21, 2009

Dear Central High School families,

I'm writing to you today to make sure you have the most up-to-date information on a situation that has come to have an impact on our school. You and your student are the cornerstones of our community and keeping you up to date on issues that affect us is an important goal for us.

In the past few days, we have had students who have shown symptoms of influenza-like illness. While there has been a lot of media attention on the influenza known as H1N1, we don't definitively know whether the illnesses we have seen in our school are that strain. What we do know is that no matter if these symptoms are linked directly to H1N1 or not, the treatment for all influenza is similar:

- **People with influenza-type illnesses should stay home** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever, even without the help of medicine. Children under 5-years-old who are experiencing symptoms of influenza-like illness should stay home for at least seven days after the symptoms began. Keep them in a separate room from other household members when possible.
- **Properly cover coughs and sneezes while cleaning hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Monitor the health of the sick child and other household members** by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu including a fever of at least 100-degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** such as water, broth, sports drinks or electrolyte beverages for infants.
- **Check with your doctor**, including asking about proper medications and any special care needed for members of your household who may be at high risk for complications from influenza, including:
 - children under 5 years old,
 - pregnant women,
 - anyone with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease
 - people at least 65 years old.

At this time, we are not closing school. Having some of our students becoming ill is not unexpected and Saint Paul Public Schools nurses have been in regular contact with outside health professionals. We are cooperating with them and receiving consistent feedback on how to best proceed as our community works to best prevent the spread of influenza and to best care for students and staff who have influenza-like illness.

Be assured that providing a safe learning environment is the highest priority for us. If there are further updates, we will let our community know through letters, phone messages and the websites of our school (www.central.spps.org) and our district (www.spps.org).

REGARDING HOMEWORK:

Encourage your student to have an arrangement with a friend to keep him/her informed of homework assignments in case they become ill.

Due to the unusually high number of students that may be absent because of this influenza, I am requesting teachers to be flexible with deadlines and in allowing students to make up homework. We must be reasonable in our expectations (of your families and our staff) as we move forward with learning in the midst of this widespread illness.

PLEASE CALL IN:

Please call 651-632-6000 to report your student's absence. If you get voicemail, you will be directed to press 2 for attendance. Please tell us if your student is absent because of influenza symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat), specifically.

As always, if you have questions regarding this, feel free to call me at (651) 632-6000. And thank you for your support of your student and Central.

Sincerely,

Mary Mackbee
Principal