

September, 2009

Dear Footprints Academy Family,

With the new school year well underway, I want to share information about the H1N1 influenza strain and plans that FPA has developed to address this situation.

As we continue to respond to the potential impact of the H1N1 influenza strain, our school will follow the guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. The expertise of these agencies will provide help to properly respond to this evolving situation.

During the school year, more people than usual in our school and communities are likely to get sick with the flu. In addition to the “regular seasonal” influenza that comes around every fall, we expect additional cases of H1N1 influenza that first appeared last spring. The H1N1 flu never completely went away over the summer and cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) are already being reported throughout the state.

Currently, H1N1 appears to be acting like seasonal influenza in terms of how sick it makes people and how it is spread. Most people who have had H1N1 in Minnesota have recovered without complications. However, like any flu virus, H1N1 can be serious and poses complication for those with underlying medical conditions, pregnant women, children under five years old, or persons over age 65.

Influenza spreads when a person with the flu coughs or sneezes. The most important steps parents and school personnel can take to reduce the spread of the flu is to teach children to wash their hands often, preferably with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub can be used) and to cover coughs and sneezes either with a tissue or the fold on the arm. It is also critical that children and school staff stay home if they have symptoms of the flu. Any student or school staff person who exhibits the following symptoms should not attend school: Fever of 100 degrees F or greater with a cough and/or a sore throat.

If a child develops these symptoms, or vomits, during the day, a parent will be notified to pick up the child from school. Sick children and adults should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without the use of fever-reducing medications). Usually, this means staying home for five to seven days. Children staying home with influenza-like illness should also avoid contact with others except to get medical care.

When H1N1 influenza emerged last spring, public health officials advised that schools be closed when a case of H1N1 was confirmed in a student or staff at a school. The current guidance from the CDC is to balance the goal of reducing the number of people who become seriously ill from influenza with the goal of minimizing the educational and academic disruption and safety risks to children. Any decision considered in the event of a large-scale flu outbreak will be made by the school administration in consultation with public health experts.

Our school will continue to share information about the H1N1 planning through updates on the school website (Footprintsacademy.com) dedicated to influenza information. In addition, important information will also be shared through newsletters. **You are reminded that FPA will host a “regular seasonal” influenza (not H1N1) vaccination clinic on Wednesday, October 14 from 7:30 – 10:15 a.m. Please register not later than October 6 via <https://secure.flubusters.com/home.aspx> .**

As a school, we are committed to preparing for a potential outbreak to help our students and staff members remain as healthy as possible. We remain hopeful that the cases of H1N1 and seasonal Influenza can be minimized through taking precautionary measures. We will monitor this closely and respond to the best current information available.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. We hope you and your family will have a wonderful and healthy school year.

Ed
ecavin@footprintsacademy.com