



April 30, 2009

Dear Federal Way Public Schools Students, Families and Staff:

We have received notification from the King County Health Department that a student at Woodmont Elementary has a probable case of H1N1 Influenza ("swine flu"). At the end of school today, the building will be closed for seven days. Parents have been asked to keep their students home. The school will re-open on Monday, May 11.

Obviously, the H1N1 Flu situation continues to change quickly. It's not unlikely that we will see more cases of H1N1 Flu and school closures in our district. Federal Way Public Schools staff members are working closely with the local, state, and national health agencies to investigate any illnesses and/or infections. While this is a time to prepare, it's not time to panic. In 2005, when "bird flu" concerns emerged, the State Department of Health, OSPI, and other state and local agencies created a multi-step plan to deal with a possible pandemic. That plan is helping schools and government agencies decide a course of action as this flu outbreak runs its course.

Here's what Federal Way Public Schools is doing. First, students or staff with a fever of 100 degrees or higher are asked to stay home. If these individuals are experiencing other symptoms – primarily headaches, body aches and coughing – they will be directed to go to a health care provider. The health care provider is responsible for determining if the individual may be infected with the H1N1 Flu. When H1N1 Flu is a possibility, a sample will be sent to the King County Health Department, who will run a test. If H1N1 Flu is confirmed, the district will be notified by the Health Department and will take the measures they direct us to.

In Washington, the local Health Department is in charge of determining if and when a school will be closed. King County Health has already determined that in the event of even a single H1N1 Flu case among staff or students, a school will be closed for a period of seven days. While the school is closed, the district's maintenance staff will take measures to thoroughly disinfect the building.

Keep in mind that it's allergy season in Washington, meaning sniffles, sinus headaches and stuffy noses are common. In addition, the normal flu season is still winding down. Testing for the specific virus is the only way to know which flu these individuals have. Staff and parents will be notified of a case of H1N1 flu, but not if a child or staff member is sent home with another illness.

H1N1 flu is much more severe than colds or allergy symptoms. Its symptoms are fever, sore throat, cough, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. The illness may last up to seven days, but people are considered to be contagious as long as symptoms persist. If you or your child is showing mild flu-like symptoms, telephone your physician if necessary or your school's nurse.

Here's what you can do to prevent the spread of H1N1 Flu:

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue, elbow or sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Children may bring hand sanitizer to school; classrooms are stocked with it as well. However, soap and water are still the best germ-killers!
- **Again - if you are sick, stay home.**

If you have any questions feel free to call the Seattle King County Public Health Department at (206) 296-4949 or visit www.kingcounty.gov/health or visit the Centers for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov. You may also contact FWPS Health Services Coordinator Sue Overton at 253-945-4575.

Sincerely,

Tom Murphy, Superintendent