

August 31, 2009

Once again the heat of summer is gradually subsiding and teachers and students have found their way back to school. This yearly transition, typically taken for granted much like the change of seasons, brings with it an inherent rejuvenation and enthusiasm. I have seen a positive energy and a spirit of hard work in all our employees. Many of you have put in long hours and much focus as you have done your best to get this school year off to a good start. Thank you for all your efforts which ultimately center on our mission of **ensuring** good academic gains in **all students**.

Flu Concerns: We have been hearing a lot about the spread of the H1N1 influenza across our nation and Kansas as well. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes that there are important differences between the new virus and seasonal flu. The H1N1 virus takes its heaviest toll in children and young adults, while seasonal flu usually strikes the elderly hardest. Also, health officials are concerned that the virus may mutate and become more virulent as it spreads through the population.

President Barack Obama is advancing plans for a government-funded vaccination campaign that will provide H1N1 flu shots free to the public. The first 100 million doses of the vaccine will not be available until mid-October, and eventually, as many as 600 million doses will be produced. There will be a separate vaccine for seasonal flu. The first H1N1 shots will be targeted to those at highest risk, including **school-age children**, young adults with underlying conditions such as asthma or diabetes, pregnant women and health-care workers.

The Hugoton USD 210 school district administration have been reviewing current Pandemic Flu Plans and have planned for the imminent risk of this virus becoming widespread this fall and want to communicate the following recommendations for our schools:

Students and School Staff:

1. **School closure will NOT occur**, unless there is a magnitude of faculty or student absenteeism that interferes with the school's ability to function.
2. **Stay home when you are sick.** Students, faculty and all staff with influenza-like illness (fever with cough or sore throat), should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care. The CDC is recommending that those with flu-like illness **stay home until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone, without using fever-reducing medications**, such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin). Check with your school nurse or healthcare provider for updated information on specific guidance on when to return to school and watch for updates on the Hugoton district website and in school newsletters.
3. **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** Students, faculty and staff who appear to have, or develop during the school day, influenza-like symptoms should be isolated promptly in a room separated from other students and staff, and sent home.
4. **Cover your mouth and nose, and wash your hands.** Follow sanitary measures to reduce the spread of influenza, including covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, coughing into your sleeve or elbow. Frequent hand washing with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap is not possible.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Pathogens are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

6. **Open communications** with student and parents to continue with assignments and coursework, when students are absent from school, or faculty are away from work.

Parents:

1. **Monitor for illness.** Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness, and should NOT send them to school or to daycare if symptoms are present.
2. **Report ALL absences from school.** Call the school and report specific symptoms, disease or reason student is not in school to assist with symptom/disease surveillance. Also, make sure the school has correct contact and emergency numbers to allow for prompt pick-up if influenza-like symptoms occur.
3. **Aspirin or aspirin-containing products should NOT** be administered to any confirmed or suspected ill case of H1N1 influenza virus infection aged 18 years and younger, due to the risk of Reye's syndrome. For more information visit the CDC website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
4. **Stay home.** If your child is ill, with influenza-like symptoms they should not attend alternative childcare or congregate in other neighborhood and community settings.
5. **Stay informed!** Check your child's book bag daily to monitor for written updates from the school. Visit the Hugoton USD 210 website to view current updates on H1N1 and school specific recommendations.

We all know that schools are a place for learning to occur, and therefore become a focus for educational activities aimed at promoting ways to reduce the spread of influenza, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Students, faculty, staff and parents have an important role in protecting ourselves and the wider community from infection with this new virus and we will continue to communicate with you about the role of educational institutions in reducing transmission of this virus as new medical and scientific information is available to us. If you have specific questions, please contact your school nurse.

Sincerely,

Mark K. Crawford

Superintendent of Schools