



Amherst County Public Schools

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you have heard from media sources such as television, newspapers, and the radio, the novel influenza A H1N1 has been confirmed throughout Virginia. As students returned to school in Amherst County, we began meeting with the officials of the local health department and communicating with the Virginia Department of Education to monitor illness in our schools. While we have had reports of flu cases, the local health department officials are not recommending that individual cases be reported to the health department or made public to parents whose children may attend a school where a flu case has been reported. This is because the flu virus is a concern throughout the community; students can contract influenza anywhere from anyone, not just in the schools.

There are steps you can take as a concerned parent to help protect your child from the potential dangers of a flu virus. As Commissioner Remley said, "Every Virginian has a role to play in protecting our population and containing the spread and impact of this disease." She urged parents to:

- Teach children good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. This includes covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, coughing and sneezing into the inside of the elbow and properly discarding used tissues. Hands should be washed frequently with soap and water and hand washing should last for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. If hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol are also effective.
- Vaccinate children and yourself for seasonal flu early and be sure to also vaccinate you and your child against novel H1N1 once a separate novel H1N1 flu vaccine becomes available.
- Monitor yourself and your child for flu-like symptoms which include fever (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), feverishness, cough, or sore throat. Some people also experience vomiting or diarrhea with novel H1N1 flu.
- If you suspect that you or your child is getting the flu, stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.
- Plan now for your children's care if you or they should become ill with the novel H1N1 virus. If this happens, you or your child might be asked to stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. People who work in a healthcare setting may be asked to stay home a full week after symptoms start. Talk to other family members, friends or neighbors about helping with child care or possibly sharing care in such a situation. Consider now who might be able to pitch in and help you. Be sure to have a family plan that includes having adequate food and supplies on hand to decrease your need to be out in public should someone get sick. .
- If symptoms worsen or cause concern, contact your doctor's office by telephone for advice before arriving there in person.

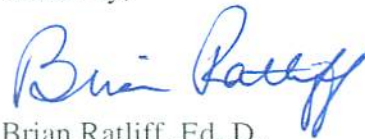
- Stay informed. We encourage you to monitor the CDC Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>) and that of the Virginia Department of Health (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov>) and Virginia Department of Education (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov>) for additional resources and the most current recommendations.

If you have questions about H1N1, please contact your health provider.

The Administration of Amherst County Schools will continue to collaborate closely with local health officials and the Department of Education. If the flu situation worsens and we are advised to communicate with parents, we will communicate through local media, letters from the superintendent, ACPS instant alert, website, and school newsletters.

Amherst County School administration is working closely with the Virginia Department of Health, the Department of Education, and local agencies to lessen the burden of this virus on our students, staff, and families. We will continue to monitor the situation so we are able to efficiently respond to any changes. Your cooperation is essential to our success and greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Brian Ratliff, Ed. D.
Superintendent