

October 28, 2009

Dear Parent, Guardian and Staff:

This is to update you regarding the spread of flu-like symptoms in the district along with steps that are being taken, and anticipated actions which may occur over the next several weeks.

As always please understand that rumors and misinformation are common when a health crisis arises, the Greater Amsterdam School District can only effectively operate with factual information which we may gather or may be given to us from agencies deeply involved with response to this situation.

To that end, the decision to close school will be based upon factual information along with consultation with the Montgomery County Health Department and the New York State Education Department. There are many schools statewide who have reported outbreaks of influenza like illnesses (ILI), most of the schools deciding to continue to operate.

On the medical side of this issue, the district has increased its surveillance of illnesses throughout the district with the assistance of the school district professional nursing staff. They have been reporting to the County Health department on a weekly basis absentee information.

On the building side, the custodial staff has increased their cleaning of high contact areas in an attempt to reduce locations that may impact the spread of the flu. Please be aware that our efforts are just a part of what may be necessary to reduce the flu's impact on your family.

Montgomery County Health Department has forwarded to the district some important reminders we would like to share with you. Symptoms of influenza-like illness (ILI) and possible novel influenza A (H1N1) include fever (measured temperature of 100°F or more) **and either** cough or sore throat. In addition, illness may be accompanied by other symptoms including headache, tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, diarrhea, and vomiting.

Therefore if a child becomes ill during the school day, the child will be separated from other children and provided a facemask to reduce the spread of infection. Parents should pick up their child if notified that their child is exhibiting the symptoms listed above. A person with ILI should be excluded from school, work, and related activities and should not go into the community, except to seek medical care, until they are symptom-free (no fever without fever control medications and feels well) for **at least 24 hours**.

As a reminder following these simple steps can help to drastically reduce the spread of illness:

- **Stay home when you are ill** and avoid contact with other people as much as possible.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or if a tissue is not available cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hand. Dispose of tissues in the trash after use.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough, sneeze or use a tissue. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.**

Seasonal flu season is here and you can protect yourself and your children by being vaccinated. In the upcoming weeks, healthcare providers will begin to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. In addition, H1N1 points of distribution will be setup throughout the county. If you are interested in having your child(ren) vaccinated against seasonal and/or H1N1, contact your healthcare provider or check your local newspaper for dates of flu clinics.

The Greater Amsterdam School District continues to be committed to the health and safety of our children and staff. If conditions change or we become aware of protocol changes from the County Health Department or the New York State Education Department, we will amend our actions as warranted.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Perillo
Superintendent of Schools

Fred Hauck
Health and Safety Officer