

September 15, 2009

Dear Parents:

We are seeing increasing reports of flu cases and flu-like symptoms among students at our school. We may be seeing more absences because parents and students are more aware and are staying home when sick, which is appreciated. It is important that parents let us know their child's symptoms when they call in their absence.

Based on the Centers for Disease Control definitions, a case of influenza would occur in an *individual presenting with fever of 101.5 or higher and one of the following symptoms:*

- \* *Cough, AND/OR*
- \* *Sore throat*
- \* *Headache*
- \* *Muscle ache*

It states that in the absence of a physician's diagnosis or laboratory test results, individuals that present with influenza-like illness (ILI) and meet the above criteria should be managed as cases of influenza.

The health department has explained that if parents take their child to the doctor and are told he/she has the flu, this does not mean that their child has the novel H1N1, commonly referred to as swine flu. A physician at the time of the visit can run what is called a rapid flu test. This is a test for seasonal flu A or seasonal flu B. They would have to send off to a laboratory to determine if the child has novel H1N1, which with the new CDC recommendations, this does not appear to be happening. The physician is really conducting a quick test to determine if flu is involved and what type of antiviral to use because of the resistance associated with flu A.

Prevention and health measures are the same no matter the type of flu, so making distinctions about types of flu is not necessary and is not being asked for by the health department as the district makes its weekly reports. We are reporting total absences and those related to flu and flu-like symptoms. If you call the school, the nurse can give you numbers of students who are reporting flu or flu-like symptoms but due to confidentiality and student health privacy issues, we cannot provide specific information regarding a type of illness or condition that might identify a particular child.

The district has health reminders posted on the website and will continue to provide updates. Our school has a link to this information on its website. Those with flu-like symptoms/illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if using antiviral drugs. If students become ill at school we will isolate them, as always, until their parents can pick them up.

We will not send a notice each time we hear of a student having flu-like symptoms or the flu, but we ask that you keep aware and promote good hand washing and coughing/sneezing etiquette and keep students who are sick at home. We promote this at school on a regular basis. We will work with the health departments in monitoring absences to determine when additional notifications/other actions are needed.

We will continue routine cleanings of our campuses, which include those areas touched often by many hands, such as door knobs, water fountains, etc. Influenza viruses can survive on hard surfaces up to 24 hours. We will conduct deep cleanings as needed.

Please know district officials have been involved in many meetings regarding swine flu and will continue to work with our local health departments to monitor the issue on the local level as needed. They state that the reality is school opened with flu active in the DFW area. *The good news is that it currently is milder generally than our traditional seasonal flu.* Our teachers are aware that students may be absent due to illness and we will work with them to make up their work and to stay on track. Together, we can make sure our students are safe, healthy and in school.

Sincerely,

**Randy Spain, Principal**

**Ronda Wise, Nurse**