



**Bloomington Public Schools
School District 87**

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Dear Colleague,

I have attended several interagency meetings this fall which have focused all of us on planning for various events such as tornados and pandemics. These meetings included representatives of major employers, colleges and universities, hospitals, and the various emergency response agencies for the county and state.

Beginning last year, the focus of everyone has been the H1N1 influenza, also known as Swine Flu. The guidance provided to school districts by national and state agencies has evolved over time. You will recall that last spring entire school districts were told to close their doors if one student tested positive for H1N1. This is no longer the recommended response.

Fortunately, the H1N1 influenza has not mutated as predicted and it has not been as serious as many predicted. However, we cannot dismiss the potential impact this virus or other strains of influenza may have on us.

I would like to provide you with some common symptoms and then suggestions to slow the spread of this and other viruses. Only the Center for Disease Control and the Illinois Department of Public Health can confirm H1N1. At this time, testing for H1N1 will only be done on those individuals who are hospitalized. If someone in District 87 is confirmed to have H1N1, the Mclean County Public Health Department will notify me of this.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1. People infected with the novel H1N1 are likely to have similar patterns of infectiousness as with seasonal flu.

As a school district, we can take actions that may reduce the spread of viruses. The following is a partial list of actions we can take:

- Everyone should wash his or her hands regularly with soap and water.
- Everyone should cover his or her nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing. If one does not have something with which to cover their nose and mouth, he/she should cough or sneeze into his/her elbow.
- The Illinois Department of Public Health encourages everyone to get a flu shot now and then again when the H1N1 vaccine is available.
- Anyone with the symptoms listed above should stay home and remain home for twenty four hours after his/her body temperature returns to normal.

The decision to close school in response to H1N1 Influenza must be made locally by the school district in conjunction with and support from the relevant local public health department. The impact of H1N1 Influenza may vary from region to region; therefore, it is crucial that district administrators rely on the advice and recommendations of their local public health department. We are monitoring the attendance rates of our students and staff and have baseline information that will help us determine the extent of an outbreak and the impact such an outbreak has on our attendance rates.

Your safety and the safety of our students is our primary goal. We will make decisions to insure that you and our students are kept safe. No one can predict how this strain of influenza or other viruses might impact the Bloomington Normal community. I am asking everyone to use common sense in responding to these events. We have a highly educated and experienced staff, and I have no doubt that we are taking the actions necessary to maintain the safety of everyone.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Nielsen
Superintendent