



P.O. Box 9310, Stamford, CT 06904
Offices at 888 Washington Blvd. Phone (203) 977-4105
www.stamfordpublicschools.org

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year. We would like you to know that we have spent the summer preparing for all aspects of your child's education. Much of our work has been focused on safety and prevention during the upcoming flu season.

Stamford Public Schools will follow flu prevention and response guidance from the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC advises that schools across the nation should stay open to the extent possible this flu season. We expect to see more illness from H1N1 than this past spring because flu is typically transmitted more easily in fall and winter. Families and staff should assume they will come into contact with H1N1 at school, at work, and in the community. **Because many doctors do not test for H1N1, we will not be able to report the actual number of school-based cases to you.** With that in mind, it is important that everyone practice prevention through hand washing and respiratory etiquette. Here are the prevention steps Stamford Public Schools is taking:

Prevention Steps the School District is Taking:

- **Hand sanitizer dispensers are being installed in every classroom** throughout the school district. Students and staff are urged to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer multiple times day.
- **Posters have been distributed to every classroom** to serve as reminders of the importance of respiratory etiquette.
- **Teachers will refer students with flu symptoms to the nurse's office** for evaluation if needed. Students with flu-like symptoms will be separated from other students in the nurse's office.
- **The custodial staff at each school has received and will follow CDC cleaning guidelines.**
- **The CDC recommends that all children aged 6 months – 24 years get a *seasonal flu vaccine*. Additionally, the CDC recommends that all children from 6 months – 18 years receive the *new H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available*.** The district will work with the Health Department to notify families when vaccine is available to school age children.

At this time, school field trips will take place as scheduled, with proper hygiene emphasized. You will be advised if guidance on this matter changes.

The Stamford Health Department will monitor school attendance rates as well as flu activity throughout the city and the region. If the flu becomes more severe, the City Health Director, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools, will determine if a school dismissal or closure is necessary. Should the City Health Director order a dismissal or closure, families would be

notified by multiple communication methods, including an automated ParentLink phone call. Please be sure to fill out and return your child's emergency card so you can be reached.

Prevention Steps You Should Take:

If your child has both:	Then you must:
Fever* (100 F) AND sore throat or cough (these are indicators your child may have the flu)	<u>Keep your child home from school and child care until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 F) or show no signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.</u>
If your child only has:	Then you must:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever* alone, OR • Vomiting or diarrhea, OR • Sore throat or new cough with no fever 	<u>Keep your child home from school and child care until symptoms are gone for 24 hours.</u> Your child may not have the flu, but it is still important to keep your child home as a precaution.

*If you do not have a thermometer, feel your child's forehead with your hand. If it is much warmer than usual, your child probably has a fever.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Cover coughs and sneezes using the elbow, arm, or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home.*

For more information, see the attached flyer and visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. Local resources include www.stamfordpublicschools.org, www.cityofstamford.org, and the Stamford Flu Hotline at (203) 276-4948. We will notify you of any additional changes to the district's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

Sincerely,



Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Johnnie A. Lee, MD, MPH
Director of Health & Social Services
and School Medical Advisor