

# **GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **UPDATE**

### **WESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL 8TH GRADE TRIP TO WASHINGTON D.C. CANCELED**

*(For immediate release: Greenwich, CT – Saturday, May 23, 2009)*

After consultation with and as recommended by State and Local Departments of Health and physicians, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, has canceled the Western Middle School 8th Grade trip to Washington, D.C. planned for next week – May 26-29, 2009. Dr. Sternberg said, “While this was a very difficult decision, after a thorough review of all of the facts, consultation with several health professionals at the State and local level, and two meetings with Western Middle School parents, we have decided that it is in the best interest of our students to cancel the trip.”

#### **Immediate next steps:**

- \* Students and staff who do NOT exhibit any flu-like symptoms should plan to attend school next week.
- \* Any students or staff who ARE exhibiting flu-like symptoms, should not come to school/work, should see their healthcare provider, and notify the school with any test results.
- \* The District will be setting up a meeting for Tuesday or Wednesday next week, May 26th or 27th with a health professional to answer any parent or staff questions.
- \* District and school professionals are working with WorldStrides, the company organizing the Washington, D.C. trip, to reschedule the trip for some time in June, if possible. There are no guarantees that this will be possible.
- \* The District is aware that the cancellation and/or postponement of this trip will result in a negative financial impact on families that did not elect to take out insurance for the trip. We will make every effort to explore options for these families.

#### **Making the Decision to cancel the Washington, D.C. trip:**

In making the decision to cancel the Washington, D.C. trip, the following information was considered:

- \* Given the current information regarding the rate and severity of student illnesses, the school medical advisor and Greenwich Hospital infectious disease physician are recommending that the district cancel or postpone the Washington trip.

\* Nineteen (19), 6th grade, WMS students have experienced flu-like symptoms, were tested by a healthcare provider using the quick flu test and received negative results – these students are sick but not with a flu.

\* Fourteen (14), 6th grade, WMS students have experienced flu-like symptoms, were tested by a healthcare provider using the quick flu test and received positive results – these students are sick with a flu but at this time we do not know if it is H1N1 – the State Department of Health is conducting additional tests to determine if their flu is the H1N1 flu virus.

\* We will not have the results of these H1N1 tests until mid to late next week.

\* Additional cases of students with flu like symptoms at WMS have not been reported to the school or Town Dept of Health at this time.

\* There were an uncommonly high number of absences at WMS today – but most do not appear to be due to student illnesses.

### **Background information:**

\* 130, WMS 6th graders went to Nature’s Classroom on Monday, May 18, 2009 – Although it was unknown to the school at the time, one of the students had been diagnosed (using the quick test) with a “flu” and was placed on a short course of anti-viral medication. The student then reported to the school on Monday, not exhibiting any symptoms and boarded the bus for the trip. The District was unaware of any of the student’s status until Thursday, May 21, 2009.

\* By Wednesday, May 20, 2009, approximately 55 students had been to the infirmary at Nature’s Classroom and 19 were sick enough (multiple symptoms, fever) to send home, the other students were experiencing a range of symptoms but were not sick enough to have parents called to pick them up.

\* The decision to cancel the remainder of the Nature’s Classroom trip was made using the following considerations:

- distance from home if more students became ill
- the severity of illness in some of the sick students
- the higher probability of infection given the living situations (multiple students in bed/bunk rooms)
- amount of activity required of students
- ability to dedicate staff to students who were ill
- national attention about the spread of H1N1

### **For more information contact:**

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Betty J. Sternberg: Superintendent of Schools at Tel [203] 625-7486

State of Connecticut at Tel [860] 509-7729

For more information on H1N1 flu:

- \* Greenwich Department of Health: [www.greenwichct.org](http://www.greenwichct.org)
- \* Connecticut Flu Watch: [www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu](http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu)
- \* Connecticut Department of Public Health: [www.ct.gov/health](http://www.ct.gov/health)
- \* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- \* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention School Guidance:  
[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/k12\\_dismissal.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/k12_dismissal.htm)

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