



## GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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September 1, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify how the Greenwich Public Schools intends to respond to the potential return of the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus as predicted by national public health officials. This letter and our District Web Site provide information on how you can help to prevent the spread of influenza A (H1N1) in our community. The following information has been developed in consultation and cooperation with the Greenwich Department of Health and follows Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance:

**Topics outlined in this letter include:**

- \* How and when we will communicate with you
- \* What you should do if your child displays flu like symptoms (fever of 100°F and a cough or a sore throat)
- \* What we can all do to mitigate the effects of a flu outbreak
- \* How a decision to close school(s) will be made

**How and when we will communicate with you:**

The most up to date information will **always** be posted on the Greenwich Public Schools website [www.greenwickschools.org/h1n1](http://www.greenwickschools.org/h1n1)

We will use our electronic telephone system (ParentLink) to contact you due to:

- \* A significant change in our situation, such as the need to close school(s)
- \* A significant change in guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH)

As we will not be receiving specific test results from the State or local Department of Health, we will **not** be communicating specific information such as whether or not anyone in your child's class or school has tested positive for influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Information regarding influenza A (H1N1) virus will also be posted on the Town of Greenwich website, so please check it frequently for updates ([www.greenwichct.org](http://www.greenwichct.org)).

**What you should do if your child displays flu-like symptoms:**

If your child displays flu like symptoms (a fever of 100°F or higher **and** a cough **or** a sore throat) they should stay home. If your child exhibits flu like symptoms while at school, they will be sent home. Consult with your child's pediatrician regarding treatment, especially for those children who may have underlying medical conditions. **Please be sure your emergency contact information is up to date and make plans now for childcare in case it is needed.**

Your child should remain out of school for at least 24 hours **after** he or she is free of fever **without** the use of fever reducing medication(s). Based on typical duration of symptoms with fever, most children will be out of school between 3-5 days. This is based on current CDC and DPH guidance as of the date of this letter and is subject to change, so please check our website [www.greenwickschools.org](http://www.greenwickschools.org) for up to date information.

When your child stays home due to flu-like illness, please check with his or her teacher(s) for assignments. As is our current practice, students are not penalized for work missed during an illness.

**What we can all do to mitigate the effects of a flu outbreak:**

***According to health officials, the most effective way to slow or prevent the spread of the flu is hand washing, good cough etiquette (cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing), staying home when ill, and to practice “social distancing”.***

This means that when your child has flu-like symptoms and is out of school you should make every effort to avoid having him or her in contact with other children. We realize that this could be an inconvenience, but it is very important if we are to restrict the spread of influenza A (H1N1) virus. Therefore, it is essential that each parent plan for the care and supervision of their ill child. We had a number of instances in the spring where sick children attended school due to an important exam or a field trip and this resulted in the flu being spread to other students, prolonging our outbreak.

While the CDC and the DPH do not require the installation of hand sanitizers, we believe it will offer another opportunity to remind children and adults alike that hand washing is an important precaution. Therefore, we will be installing hand sanitizer dispensers in various locations throughout the schools in September.

If you or your child has a compromised immune system or other medical condition that would classify you as “high risk” for complications to the flu, you should consult with your physician to see if you or your child should take additional precautionary measures.

At this time, health officials have informed us that the Influenza A (H1N1) vaccine will be available most likely in limited quantities and distributed to outlined priority groups in the community. Although, we do not know how the vaccine will be distributed at this time, school-aged children are included in these priority groups. Once we are notified by the Greenwich Department of Health about vaccine distribution, we will make the information available.

**How a decision to close school(s) will be made:**

The research on the effect of school closing on the spread of the flu is inconclusive and we will likely not close school unless the level of student/faculty absenteeism interferes with our ability to function. In this event, the decision to close school(s) will be made by the Superintendent in consultation with the Greenwich Department of Health. This decision will be made according to CDC and DPH guidance in effect at the time.

When this decision is made, the information will be posted on the Greenwich Public Schools website (with links from each school website) and we will notify parents by phone using our electronic communications system (ParentLink). Again, it is important to plan in advance of this possibility for the care and supervision of school children. Secondary resources for information will include email as available, Friday Folders at the elementary level, etc.

If the school year is shortened due to extended school closure, it is unlikely that the State Department of Education will give us a waiver on the 180-day school year requirement. Therefore, we will be forced to make up the days by shortening the December holiday break, the February Winter break, the April Spring break, and/or extending the school year beyond the scheduled end of classes. The decision to shorten vacations or extend the school year will be made based on several factors including the length of closure. We hope that we are not put in the position to make such a decision, but we want to make sure that you are aware that closure is a possibility. Once again, the best way to avoid school closures is to take precautions - good hand washing, cough etiquette, and social distancing – to lower the risk of contracting and/or spreading the flu.

I am confident that the entire Greenwich community will work together to ensure that this guidance is followed in order to safeguard the well being of our children. Thank you all in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Dr. Sidney A. Freund  
Superintendent of Schools  
Greenwich Public Schools