

November 6, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

School closures due to influenza related illness are in the news. This update is intended to provide you with information as to our current situation. The Enfield Public Schools working in conjunction with Federal and State Health agencies, along with the North Central District Health Department, are advised and urged to stay open during this flu season. According to the CDC, school dismissal is the last of the recommended school responses to pandemic influenza. Should it become necessary to close an individual school(s) or the entire District, we will alert you.

A school wide absence rate of 40% is suggested as a cut point for considering school closures. For the week ending November 6th the Enfield Public Schools have seen a decrease in the total absence rate at most schools from the week ending October 30th. For example, Parkman School and Memorial School had absence rates in the 25% range last week. Today those two buildings are under 10% absence rates. However, we do have schools running a higher absence rate than last week such as Whitney School with an absence rate of 15% today. Whitney School's rate this week has been "level" and according to the CDC that would be considered a good sign because it has not "spiked".

I also want to make you aware of the State of Connecticut's "H1N1 Situation Report". This weekly report is prepared by the State Department of Public Health and the Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security. It provides a brief overview of the H1N1 situation in Connecticut, as well as on the national and international levels. The report can also be accessed off the Town of Enfield's web page. As stated numerous times before, www.flu.gov is also an excellent source for information on H1N1.

The most important support that you can provide for your child and his/her classmates is to keep your child home if ill and remain at home until fever and flu like symptoms disappear for 24 hours without the aid of medications. This is especially true if your school holds an after school event. Students absent from school should not attend after school events.

Finally, if school is not closed and you disagree with the decision to stay open please exercise your discretion as a parent and/or guardian and keep your child home from school. Simply contact the school office and state that you decided to keep your child home. Again, please keep sick children home, encourage hand washing, and practice appropriate covering of a cough or sneeze.

Sincerely,

John Gallacher, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools