



September 16, 2009

Message to Parents, Teachers, Staff and Other Stakeholders:

Novel H1N1 influenza is here in our community, and has affected every area of DeKalb County. According to the DeKalb County Board of Health (DCBOH), not all people who are ill with H1N1 actually get tested for the virus, so we may not know exactly when a particular school has a confirmed case. What we can report is that we are seeing an increase in the number of students with influenza-like illness throughout our school system, which is unusual for this time of year. As a result, we are working closely with the Board of Health to ensure that our students and our school environments stay as healthy as possible. The Board of Health is working closely with the state and The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to monitor and stay abreast of the H1N1 and seasonal flu information, as well as treatment and recommendations. **It should be noted that the DeKalb Board of Health is our official source of information relative to Novel H1N1 and seasonal flu issues and concerns.**

Parents, we cannot promote healthy learning environments for students without your help. We urge you to please keep your sick children at home. If your child becomes ill while at school, please pick up your child promptly. We are asking that you continue to encourage your children to use proper sneeze and cough etiquette and hand washing hygiene. Furthermore, we ask that you refrain from volunteering or attending school related functions if you are ill.

We are in daily contact with the DeKalb County Board of Health and are also meeting with Dr. S. Elizabeth Ford, District Health Director, and her staff on a regular basis. We are working with our nursing staff and health classes to make sure that students are taught to use proper sneeze/cough etiquette and hand washing techniques and to stay home when they are ill with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher. At each school, we are asking staff to monitor children for signs of illness when they arrive at school as well as throughout the day.

We are also investigating what, if any, allowances will be made at the state and federal level on the attendance issues of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). We are getting information from our schools when they receive reports of flu-like symptoms and we have a reporting procedure for schools with over 10% daily absenteeism rate. This information is also reported to the Board of Health.

Guidance from The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that schools do not have to be dismissed or closed due to suspected or confirmed cases of Novel H1N1 flu. The decision to dismiss or close a school lies with the DeKalb County Board of Education in collaboration with the DCBOH: This decision will be based on the school's ability to operate if there are significant student and/or staff absences or other circumstances unique to a particular school or student population.

DeKalb County Schools has been proactive in addressing Novel H1N1, seasonal and other flu-like symptoms. We will work to keep you informed via updates to our district website (www.dekalb.k12.ga.us) and the CDC website (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/), written and electronic correspondence sent home to parents and other stakeholders, public service announcements on PDS Channel 24-TV, information sharing at stakeholder meetings and any other available communication tools that may be identified. It is the desire of the DeKalb County School System to work together with parents, stakeholders, students, staff and appropriate agencies to ensure the health of those in the schoolhouse and the community at large.

Important Reminders to Prevent the Spread of Flu:

- ✔ Hand Washing or Alcohol Based Sanitizers
- ✔ Sneeze and Cough Etiquette
- ✔ Social Distancing/Stay Home When Sick