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Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools

*Ensuring
opportunities
for learning,
personal growth
and social
responsibility.*

Monday, May 4, 2009

Dear parent or guardian of the BH-BL student:

As you know, the new strain of influenza called H1N1 or swine flu continues to be a major concern all across the country. While the swine flu cases in the US currently appear to be more mild than had been initially feared, medical authorities cannot predict what will happen in this evolving situation, and they continue to urge vigilance and preparedness for a possible pandemic.

I am writing to update you about what we are doing in the school district about this threat and to ask you to keep several things in mind.

What is happening at BH-BL

- As of this morning we have NO confirmed cases and NO suspected cases of the swine flu in our schools.
- School nurses and administrators are receiving daily communications and updates from county and state health departments. The New York State Department of Health, the State Education Department and the federal Centers for Disease Control have been doing an excellent job providing schools with information to prepare for and prevent the spread of this disease.
- We have posted links to the CDC and State Health Department on the homepage of the district website at www.bhbl.org We will continue updating this as the situation evolves.
- Our custodians are taking extra care to ensure that all bathrooms have soap in the dispensers.
- Teachers, nurses and other staff have been re-teaching and reminding students about the important hygiene practices described below.

What everyone — especially parents — can do to help

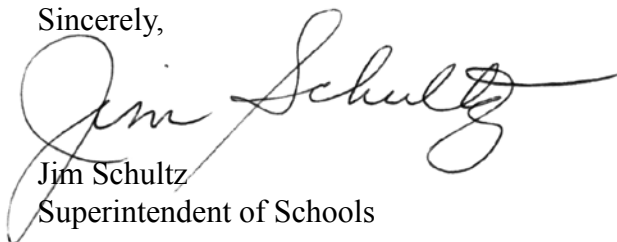
1. Hand washing and cough etiquette are very important! Please reinforce these basic preventative measures with your children:
 - Wash your hands frequently with warm water (where available) and soap. Teach your children to wash their hands for 20 seconds or approximately the time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
 - When soap and water are not available, hand sanitizers may be used. Hand gels, rubs and wipes all work well as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizers.



- Teach your children to avoid spreading germs by always covering their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, and then immediately throwing the tissue in the trash. If no tissues are available, cough into the inside of your elbow. “Cough or sneeze into your sleeve” – not your hands!
 - Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick. Follow the Yardstick Rule. Stay 3 feet (a yardstick) away from someone who is coughing or sneezing.
2. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that he or she does NOT attend school or go anywhere else – such as to child care, the mall or sporting events – where other people would be exposed to flu germs. Flu-like symptoms include: a fever (over 100 degrees), feverishness, sore throat, cough, or runny nose. Additional symptoms that may be experienced with flu include muscle pain, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea.
 3. If the swine flu continues to spread, it may be necessary to close some schools for a period of a week or more to decrease the number of people who will otherwise get sick. According to the State Health Department: *“Children are very susceptible to getting this new virus, and schools may serve as an amplification point for spreading the virus in a community. The reason for closing schools during this H1N1 outbreak is to try to reduce the spread of the virus.”*
School closure is by no means inevitable, but I want to be sure that parents realize it is possible so that you can start to plan for how it could impact your family. If necessary, I would make the decision to close school in direct consultation with health authorities.
 4. The State Health Department and the CDC have posted extensive information and Frequently Asked Questions about swine flu on their websites. You can go to www.bhbl.org for these links and to view the latest announcements about the situation here at BH-BL.

We will continue to communicate with you as the situation warrants, and as always will do everything we can to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,



Jim Schultz
Superintendent of Schools