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To: Parents and Guardians
From: David Carpenter, Superintendent of Schools
Date: August 19, 2009
Subject: Infection Prevention and Flu Season

As we enter flu season, I want to share with you the steps we take in our schools to help control the spread of infection, plus things we can all do to help. Your child's health and safety are our top concerns.

Our school system works closely with the Houston County Health Department and North Central Health District. Public health officials monitor situations carefully and keep us informed of illnesses such as flu that could impact our schools. Likewise, if our teachers and nurses see students with flu-like symptoms, we share this information with the Health Department. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently shared its new guidance for school administrators, to include two important points: 1) The closing of schools is a local decision to be made by school systems and local health officials. 2) The CDC no longer advocates the closure of schools to prevent the spread of H1N1 unless severity or conditions change. Please be assured that we will remain in constant touch with our health department during this time. In addition, our system has a Pandemic Flu plan and participates in community planning sessions in the event of a pandemic.

Our nursing staff members closely monitor our students and employees. Our schools' routine infection-control practices are listed below.

- Any student or adult at school with flu-like symptoms or a fever and cough are isolated and sent home.
- Custodians disinfect and practice preventive cleaning measures.
- Teachers also disinfect with Defender, an environmentally-safe disinfectant.
- Students are taught the following preventive protocols:
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
 - Sneeze and cough into your elbow or shoulder.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Rub hands until dry when using sanitizers.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
 - Do not share writing utensils. Do not eat or drink after one another.

We need your help to prevent the spread of illness in our schools – not just the flu, but any kind of virus. Please encourage your children to take the simple preventive steps listed above. These are everyday actions you can take to stay healthy, too.

If your child gets sick, please keep him or her home from school at least 24 hours after their fever is gone, and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Know the signs and symptoms of the flu: fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and tiredness; some also vomit or have diarrhea. Talk with your physician about having your family – to include your children – vaccinated against regular seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu.

If you would like information about H1N1 (swine) flu or flu in general, visit the Web site of the North Central Health District at www.northcentralhealthdistrict.com or the CDC at www.cdc.gov.

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