

CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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To develop students who are competent and creative thinkers,
curious and confident learners, and compassionate citizens.

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I have been working closely with John Ciccotelli, Director of Public Health in Canton, Terri Khoury, Canton's Public Health Nurse, and Canton Public Schools' Nurse Leader, Janet Donnelly, to develop a protocol for responding to potential H1N1 (previously referred to as Swine Flu) cases that might show up in our schools. As of this date, there are no such cases in Canton, but I think it is wise to communicate to you how we will proceed if in the future a student has the H1N1 virus. And while this letter describes a protocol for students, we will be following a similar approach for any adult who works for the Canton Public Schools.

If a student develops flu like symptoms, **it is important that you keep your child home from school.** Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with H1N1 flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, dizziness, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. While each individual is different, many health officials recommend that a seven- day period is often needed for the flu to completely run its course and that is the recommended time that a child should stay home. If a child develops symptoms during school, the school nurse will examine the student and require that the parent or guardian pick the child up from school and have a doctor do a more extensive examination. As a precautionary step, the nurse may ask the child to wear a mask while waiting in a room where contact with others will be minimized. The child should not return to school until he or she is symptom free. We will also require a doctor's note approving the child's return to school.

Physicians may do a quick nasal swab if necessary based on the symptoms. The physician would then determine the need for additional testing by another lab for further study. If it turns out that the tests indicate that it is H1N1 flu, and if the Board of Health recommends it, we would close the particular school the child attends. At this time, the Center for Disease Control recommends that schools close for 7-14 calendar days in response to an actual H1N1 case. Part of our deliberations at that point would also involve estimating the likelihood that students from other schools might have been exposed. Depending on the probability of contact and the advice from the Board of Health, the school closing could affect other schools and day care facilities, in addition to the one the student with H1N1 attends.

If a school closes, we would alert parents via a Connect Ed call. The Board of Health has indicated that there would be no significant advantage to closing the school immediately. Consequently, the school would close at the end of the regular school day, all after school activities would be canceled, and normal bus and van transportation would be available. In that event, parents or guardians will have the option of picking up children earlier, but it will not be necessary to do so.

John Ciccotelli has also indicated that conditions impacting this flu strain are changing rapidly. Consequently, if we are awaiting the results of the secondary lab tests that determine whether an Influenza strain is H1N1, we might also need to close school if conditions throughout the state warrant it. While conditions at this time in Massachusetts do not necessitate such a precautionary move, I did want to at least mention this possibility.

Please continue to refer to the Canton Public Schools website where we have a section of information related to the H1N1 flu. We will be updating this part of the website regularly. The protocol I have described above was developed based on the **most current information available at this point in time.** The information on H1N1 is rapidly changing as we acquire additional data and the CDC is continually reviewing its guidelines for schools. We will respond appropriately as we gain more insights into this virus and its impact on communities. It would be most helpful to our efforts, if you would make sure your child's school(s) has updated emergency numbers and if you would now develop a contingency plan in the event that school needs to close. While this situation is worrisome, I am confident that we are proceeding in a way that maximizes your child's health and safety.

Sincerely,

John D'Auria, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

THE CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR,
RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AGE OR DISABILITY.