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BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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September 14, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I want to first welcome you back to a new school year. We are well underway, your children have settled in, and I am certain your family has adjusted to the rhythms of the school year.

As you all know, we are anticipating the return of the H₁N₁ influenza virus. Although there is some uncertainty about when the virus may occur in our schools and the severity of the illness, there are certain measures that I would encourage you to take now.

The most effective way to protect people from the flu and other illnesses is to keep sick people away from healthy people. So, if your child is sick, it is important to keep him/her home. Please check your child every morning before sending him/her to school.

If your child has a fever of 100°F and a sore throat or cough, these symptoms suggest an influenza-like illness. Your child may have the flu. Other symptoms may include runny nose, body aches, vomiting or diarrhea. If your child has an influenza-like illness, he/she should remain home until at least 24 hours after they are fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

I would encourage you to make arrangements for the care of your child should he/she be home ill. Sending your child to a child-care setting with other children would not be advised.

We are continuing to monitor for influenza-like illness at all of our schools. We have taken numerous steps to keep our facilities clean through the use of cleaning materials that are effective against viruses. Our custodial staff clean heavily used areas that are touched often, such as doorknobs, lavatory doors, etc., throughout each day.

Further, our teachers, including our health teachers are reinforcing healthy habits, such as hand-washing and proper sneezing. Posters have been posted throughout each building.

While we are taking every precaution here in the schools, we are uncertain what an outbreak may bring. Closing school would be a last resort for us, and would be decided dependent upon the situation and in consultation with state and local health departments. Our plan at this time is to keep schools open. However, this would be a good time for your family to make tentative plans for your children's care should this unlikely scenario take place. Additionally, please be sure the school has your telephone numbers, emergency contact information, and your email address.

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I will be communicating with you periodically to update you. We will also post information on our website where you will find a link for H₁N₁ influenza on the homepage. We will also use our notification system, AlertNow, to communicate.

Thank you for your help in keeping the school environment as healthy as possible for all students and staff. Your child is our number one priority, and we will continue to put in place measures that will ensure his/her health and safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen C. Halligan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'K'.

Kathleen C. Halligan, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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