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October 20, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardians:

I am writing to update you on the H1N1 influenza situation.

According to the state and local health departments, Connecticut is presently experiencing only local outbreaks of the H1N1, although the outbreak is widespread in 41 other states. Any influenza that is experienced at this time of year is considered H1N1. Because the illness is generally mild, many people do not visit their doctors. Those that do will not, in general, be tested. Therefore, all cases of H1N1 will not be documented through testing.

Here in Branford, we are beginning to see a few isolated cases. We do anticipate, however, that the cases will increase. Please reinforce healthy habits with your children, and be sure to keep your child home should he/she be ill. Following the guidelines for return to school is imperative. Students should not return to school unless and until they have been free of symptoms and fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing drugs. Also, pay particular attention to your child's health status as you send them off each morning. We do know that people can become ill from this virus very quickly.

In the next few days, we will begin to use masks in the health room for students who are being sent home and have fevers of 100.0 degrees F. or higher or present with flu-like symptoms. It will be helpful if you talk with your child about the use of a mask and how it prevents the spread of germs. We plan on discussing the use of masks with our elementary students over the next week or so.

The East Shore Health Department is conducting mini-clinics for children 2 to 4 years of age and caretakers of children under 6 months of age. These clinics are held on Thursdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Please contact them to arrange an appointment. You can contact them through their website www.esdhd.org or by phone at 203.481.4233. We have linked their website to our homepage.

The most recent information that I have regarding the vaccine is that we now expect the vaccine to be available for our healthy student population in mid to late November. The supplies are less than anticipated and we are receiving them later than originally thought. Based on our feedback the health department received from Branford parents, a free clinic will be held once the vaccine is received.

I will keep you informed through periodic updates on Alert Now and our website. You may also access information and guidelines provided by the CDC and Connecticut Flu Watch available on their web sites at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu> and <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch>.

Sincerely,

Kathleen C. Halligan, Ph.D., Superintendent