

November 12, 2009

To: Parents and Staff of the Putnam Valley School District

There has been much concern expressed recently regarding the current status of the H1N1 virus and its presence not only in Putnam County but also in our schools. Currently, we are hearing from parents whose children have exhibited flu-like symptoms and their physician believes that their child might have the H1N1 flu. However, since local physicians are not routinely testing for the H1N1 flu, no definitive diagnosis can be made and the illness is treated symptomatically. Regardless of whether or not the diagnosis is H1N1 flu or another viral illness, we continue to follow the guidelines of the State Health Department in the operation of our schools.

Specifically, the State does not recommend that we close our schools as long as the level of absenteeism among students and staff does not impede or inhibit a safe environment. While our student absentee rate is slightly higher this fall than in the recent past, we are not seeing dramatic spikes that would cause concern. At this time, we will continue to operate under the recommendations of the NYS Department of Health that individuals with flu or flu-like symptoms should stay home from school or work and only go out if necessary to see their physician.

Additionally, the NYS Department of Health recommends the following in the case of a flu-like illness:

- Drink plenty of fluids and get plenty of rest
- Keep tissues in a trash bag next to the sick person
- Keep sick person away from others
- Return to school or work only when no fever for 24 hours without the use of medication

At present, these are the recommendations from our nursing staff when they are notified of a child having flu-like symptoms or when they observe these symptoms of a student in school.

Should the situation change in terms of guidelines from the NYS or Putnam County Health Departments, we will share these changes with you. In the meantime, please communicate to us through our nurses and our attendance personnel when your child is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, as monitoring the extent of students absent with these symptoms is key in our getting through this challenging season.

Sincerely,
Dr. Marc Space
Superintendent of Schools