

August 17, 2009

Dear Parents,

As you know, this year we will need to be especially vigilant regarding the outbreak of seasonal flu since there is an additional concern about the H1N1 virus. While there are no current cases of H1N1 in our diocesan schools, we want to begin this school year by being ready for the possibility that this virus will become common in the area and we want to be especially vigilant.

Like any flu virus, H1N1 can be easily spread from person to person, but it can be more severe than other more common seasonal flu viruses. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the likelihood of the spread of the flu in our schools. Our hope and our intent is to do all that we can to protect our students and also to be able to keep the schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner throughout this flu season. We need your help in order to do this.

We will work closely with county health departments to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take if the flu begins to spread among our students. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

**If the flu becomes severe**, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school,
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick.

Throughout this year we will do everything we can to keep our school functioning as usual. We ask that you please help us by doing the following:

- **Emphasize to your children that they must wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Please set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Caution them NOT to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues or covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *must be sent home*.

For the most current information about the flu, please visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO. For more information about what our schools are doing, please visit our website [www.ptdiocese.org](http://www.ptdiocese.org). We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu, if they occur.

Thank you, in advance, for helping to keep our students safe and to do all we can to prevent an outbreak of the flu in our schools.

Yours in Christ,

Kevin B. Vickery  
Superintendent of Schools