



Niskayuna Central

SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.niskayunaschools.org

Kevin S. Baughman, Ph.D.
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Dear Faculty and Staff:

We provided a communication to you a few weeks ago regarding the H1N1 virus with similar information provided to parents. ***This is an important update.*** Our school district has experienced higher than normal student and staff absences. A substantial portion of these absences are connected to influenza-like illnesses, including suspected cases of the H1N1 flu.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), virtually all influenza-like illness is likely caused by H1N1 at this point in time. CDC reports there is no current seasonal influenza currently observed. Therefore, the CDC is suggesting physicians assume all outpatient influenza-like illness is H1N1 without any confirmatory testing. For this reason, we should assume that there have been and will likely continue to be cases of H1N1 influenza in our schools.

Dr. David Pratt, Schenectady County Health Commissioner, emphasizes that many H1N1 flu cases appear to have symptoms consistent with those of seasonal flu. Consequently, prevention and treatment strategies for both H1N1 and seasonal flu are the same, and most people recover without medical care or hospitalization.

When reporting your absences by phone, we are encouraging everyone to describe the symptoms of the illness. Although providing this information is completely voluntary, it will help the school district and county collect data and track levels and types of illness in the district.

District officials encourage faculty and staff with severely high-risk medical conditions or who are pregnant to talk with their private healthcare providers to determine the best course of action to maximize protection from this virus. Faculty and staff can also contact our school nurses to discuss health concerns.

The school district will attempt to maintain a regular daily schedule of classes and afterschool activities. The after-school activities schedule could be affected by a marked increase in student absenteeism. It is usually in the best interest of children for schools to remain open since children are generally safer in school, and could just as easily contract the virus or infect others while shopping, visiting, etc. Should a decision be made to close, we will try to give at least 24-hour notice through

communication channels similar to cancellations due to inclement weather, e-mails, calling trees, etc. State and county officials would be consulted prior to making any decision on school closure. If we were to close, faculty and staff would still be expected to report as they would during a mid-winter or spring recess week.

For our instructional staff, we request that:

- Teachers remind students that when a student is sick, the child should stay home.
- Teachers tell students in class that we will provide opportunities for work and test make-up when a child returns to school as long as the child has a legally excused note from their parent.
- Teachers have instructional plans for multiple days for a substitute in the event he/she is ill with this virus—which has a recuperative time of about 3-5 days.
- Teachers send any student they suspect may be sick to the school nurse immediately.

The Schenectady County Health Department has not yet received a sufficient supply of the H1N1 flu vaccine to begin mass vaccines. Niskayuna school officials and staff are preparing for the county to offer vaccinations to students in the district. Immunizations are expected to begin between mid-November and early December. Participation will be voluntary. The county will limit the vaccine in schools to: a) Children ages 0-24; b) Pregnant women or women who are considering getting pregnant; c) Parents with a child at home under 6 months of age; and d) Those with a severely compromised immune system. Health officials indicate that it takes between 10-14 days after receipt of the vaccine before protection from the virus becomes effective.

Faculty and staff who have additional questions or concerns should contact their health care provider or a school nurse. Please also check the district web site at www.niskyschools.org for updated and additional information on the H1N1 situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin S. Baughman".

Kevin S. Baughman, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools