

October 15, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you may know, flu is spreading easily from person to person and school-age children are among the groups most affected. As a result, student and staff absences from school will fluctuate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that flu is widespread in many states, including Maryland, and that almost all of the flu viruses they have identified so far across the country are of the H1N1 strain. Although the school is unable to verify whether sick students and staff have H1N1 (swine) flu, we do know that people are reporting or exhibiting flu-like illness.

Please be assured that we are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu in our school. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) continues to work closely with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to monitor student and staff absences due to illness. Students and staff who exhibit flu-like symptoms are staying home or being sent home in accordance with guidance from the CDC. Staff continues to model and encourage students to practice good hygiene—washing hands frequently; coughing into a tissue or sleeve; and avoiding touching the eyes, nose, and mouth—and our school is being routinely cleaned following guidelines approved by county health officials.

We want to keep the school operations on a normal schedule and minimize any disruption to teaching and learning. You can help us in our efforts to prevent the spread of flu by:

- **Knowing the symptoms of the flu.** These include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired.
- **Keeping children home from school if they are sick.** Individuals who have been sick with the flu should stay home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours. Any children or staff who are sick at school *will be sent home*.
- **Reminding your children to wash their hands often with soap and water.**
- **Encouraging your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food, or utensils.
- **Telling your children to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.** If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

For more information, visit the MCPS website at [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org), the Montgomery County government website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/h1n1flu), or call the County flu hotline at 240-777-4200.

In order to ensure that the school can reach you should it be necessary, please notify us of any changes to the phone number(s) and email address that we have on file for you. We will continue to keep you informed.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Liess*

