

October 30, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians of Brooklyn School Students:

I am updating the information I sent you last week on the issue of student absences due to flu-like symptoms in our student population. We have been notified by the interim Director of Health that five (5) Brooklyn samples were tested for Influenza H1N1 at the state lab and the verbal report was positive. We do not know whether these samples were from our students or other members of the Brooklyn Community.

The absentee rate for the past three days has ranged from 11.4% to 14.6% of our student enrollment and the majority of these students were exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Although student absences do not necessarily indicate actual cases of H1N1 flu, there is no question that most of the students who are absent are exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

As you know from various reports, schools throughout Connecticut have been experiencing student absenteeism as a result of the flu and there have been many questions raised about closing schools to prevent the spread of the virus. However, you need to know that the State Department of Education has encouraged local school districts to consider closing schools only if the local situation warrants it as school districts must exhaust all other options to make up any days missed, such as elimination of school vacation periods, holidays and/or extension of the school year, before they petition the state for a waiver of school days missed.

Therefore, unless there is a significant increase in our absentee rate, we do not expect to close school. We are checking attendance daily, our nurses are seeing every student who complains of not feeling well and are consulting with parents on a daily basis offering recommendations on care of students who are ill and our teachers are monitoring the issue of continuity of learning with students who have been absent (average length of absence is 3-4 days) so that the students' educational program is not seriously disrupted.

We urge you to be alert to the flu-like symptoms which should warrant concern:

- fever (temperature of 100 degrees or higher) with a persistent cough or a sore throat;
- other symptoms may include body aches, headache or fatigue

If you have questions, our school nurses are available to respond to your questions and my phone number is 774-9153.

Sincerely,

Louise S. Berry
Superintendent of Schools