

November 2, 2009



Dear EICS Parent/ or Guardian,

This letter is a quick update regarding the H1N1 pandemic and how this is impacting our schools. As was mentioned in the October 23, 2009 letter sent home to all EICS parents, which is also available on our website www.eics.ab.ca under Division-Pandemic Preparedness, a number of our schools in the Division have recently experienced an increase in student absence due to influenza-like illness, which is defined as: the sudden onset of respiratory symptoms with new cough and fever (not always present) with one or more of: sore throat; muscle aches; joint pain; weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea may also be present.

As part of our Division and School pandemic plan, we need your help in limiting the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu. If your child is showing symptoms of influenza-like illness, please keep your child at home until they are free of symptoms, feeling well, and are able to fully participate in all normal daily school activities. Most importantly, please report to your child's school, if your child is absent because of influenza-like illness.

Our division is closely monitoring the spread of flu in our schools and is in constant contact with Alberta Health Services. Right now, we are in Stage A of our pandemic plan. What does this mean? It means that we are closely monitoring our schools, looking for trends in the spread of infection, working closely with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education, educating our students on proper hand-washing techniques and cough etiquette, increasing the disinfecting of high-touch areas in our schools, and maintaining hand-sanitizer stations.

Working with Alberta Health Services, if the EICS Pandemic Action Team determines there is a trend in the spread of H1N1 in our schools then our pandemic plan will advance to Stage B – which may include the possibility of canceling/postponing high-risk curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities involving groups. Should this happen, you will be notified through our new communication technology – Synervoice – which enables the Division to call and email parents in our Division to update them on the actions of the Division Pandemic Action Committee.

As of today, Alberta Health Services are no longer testing individual mild flu cases due to the strain on health resources and will no longer be notifying schools of confirmed cases of H1N1. Instead, they are asking schools to notify them if there is a 10 per cent or greater absenteeism due to illness in the school settings, which is already in place as part of the EICS Division and School Pandemic Plans. Should schools experience an increased trend in absenteeism, Alberta Health Services, together with our Division, will investigate and recommend further preventative measures.

EICS truly appreciates your help in limiting the spread of influenza in our schools. As a Catholic community, this is our chance to come together and support one another as we face this new challenge.

Sincerely,



Dr. Chris Diachuk, Superintendent of Schools