

October 29, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I wanted to follow up with more information and some reminders concerning influenza A(H1N1) since, as you are well aware, flu season has now arrived. Understandably everyone is concerned because people are getting sick and school absenteeism has increased – as it does at this time of year every year. That said I want to emphasize that the safety and security of our students and staff is paramount, and consequently we have spent a great deal of time ensuring the board and its schools and centres are prepared, clean, and vigilant.

1. Remember that staff is no different from you and feel the same things you do – please be patient and courteous. They are following the most up to date information (updates are distributed to principals as soon as we receive them) and procedures. The Ministry of Health and Social Services is making ALL decisions regarding this matter. The Education Department, and ultimately schools, are only messengers. Principals are doing their very best to do what's right by everybody!
2. We will not be issuing “statistics” on a school by school basis at this time because what we have is inconclusive. I can tell you that as of the writing of this letter there have been thirteen (13) reported cases of A(H1N1) influenza across our school board, however, we do know in some of these cases no medical tests were conducted. This does not, obviously account for cases we do not know about. It would be safe to conclude, however, that A(H1N1) has most probably touched every school and community in our territory.
3. Student absenteeism has averaged between 5% and 20% in our schools over the past three weeks, most in the lower range. We have had one case where the rate was 30% for a few days. However, these figures can also be deceiving. We have many small schools (less than 100 students), so a few absences can make a huge difference in the percentages.
4. Reports that inoculations will take place in French language schools are false. Boards have passed resolutions to ask the Education Department to push for this to happen, but as indicated above the Ministry of Health and Social Services will make the determination, and as of now, schools will NOT be used. If there is a change it will happen in all schools regardless of language spoken.

Again I ask that in order to keep the virus from spreading to more people, if your child becomes ill with fever and symptoms such as cough, sore throat, headache, significant fatigue or muscle aches and pains, we are asking that you **keep your child at home until the symptoms have disappeared.** Also note, **any children presenting these symptoms at school will be sent home.** For this reason, we recommend that you ensure arrangements are made to plan for emergency child care and that we have your updated contact numbers.

For more information about the influenza A(H1N1) virus and on how to help prevent its spread, we encourage you to visit the *Pandémie Québec* website ([www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca)).

Thank you very much for your cooperation and patience in ensuring we preserve a healthy and safe learning environment.

Sincerely,

Mike Dawson  
Director General