

October 19, 2009

Dear Parents or Guardians,

We are beginning to see the first cases of flu in our school district. In response to the anticipated impact on both student and staff attendance, we are taking specific steps to not only reduce the spread of flu in the Westbrook Public Schools, but also to maintain a system whereby ill students may continue to obtain information about material being covered in their classes on days they are absent from school.

As reported previously, we continue to work closely with the State Board of Education, the Westbrook Health Department and the Connecticut River Area Health District to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

The Department of Public Health has initiated a swine flu hotline, should you have specific questions. The number is 1-800-830-9426 and there is someone available from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The following list again highlights important actions that you can take now to help keep you, your child, and family well during the flu season:

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue, their elbow, arm or sleeve instead of their hand.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea. Your health care provider will decide whether antiviral drugs are needed to treat your illness. Remember, most people with 2009 H1N1 have had mild illness and have not needed medical care or antiviral drugs and the same is true of seasonal flu.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever without using fever-reducing medicine. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home*.
- **Make arrangements** for other trusted family or friends to care for your child if they are sick and you can not be home with them. This plan should not involve exposure to other well children.

Below are a list of websites where you may obtain the most current information about the flu:

<http://www.chathamhealth.org/>

<http://www.crahd.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/schoolguidance.htm>

In the event your child is ill and must be absent from school, he/she may obtain class work by contacting the school or logging on to the teacher's website. Elementary teachers may use a combination of take-home packets and information posted to their websites. Some assignments are not easily transferred electronically or may not be developmentally appropriate in that format. Students who are well enough are encouraged to complete the assignments in conjunction with textbooks, workbooks and other resources as prescribed by their teachers. While this method clearly will not replace in-class instruction, it will allow students to remain current and up-to-date on course material if and when they are absent.

On those occasions when teachers are out ill, each school will continue to seek a substitute teacher who will implement "substitute plans" as prepared by the regular classroom teacher. Given that we anticipate that the flu will

most likely impact our pool of substitute teachers also, I have asked principals to design contingency plans to combine classes where appropriate and to develop plans to utilize all personnel in their respective schools to maintain a credible instructional program during periods of increased absence of teaching staff. Our goal is to keep schools functioning in a normal manner during this flu season and open to all students and staff.

Our hope is that working together we can minimize the disruption caused during this flu season.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Charles". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Patricia Charles  
Superintendent

September 17, 2009

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian,

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in Westbrook Public Schools. We want to keep our schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with the State Board of Education, the Connecticut River Area Health District, and the Westbrook Emergency Management team to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

There are important actions that you can take now to help keep you, your child and family well during the flu season. Here are a few things you can do to help.

§ **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.

§ **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue, their elbow, arm or sleeve instead of their hand.

§ **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

§ **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing medicine. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.

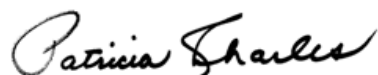
§ **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school *will be sent home.*

§ **Make arrangements** for other trusted family or friends to care for your child if they are sick and you can not be home with them. This plan should not involve possible exposure to other well children.

The web site [www.crahd.org](http://www.crahd.org) contains current information about the flu. For specific information about what the Westbrook Public Schools are doing, visit [www.westbrookctschools.org](http://www.westbrookctschools.org).

By working together we hope to keep your children well this flu season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Charles". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Patricia Charles  
Superintendent

August 2009

Dear Parents,

It seems impossible that the beginning of the school year is right around the corner! Already teachers are in their classrooms creating an inviting atmosphere and preparing their lessons. The staff and I are looking forward to welcoming your children and we are ready to get started! Renewed by the summer, teachers and students return to school with a fresh outlook and great enthusiasm. We are *all* filled with anticipation this time of year.

Important work occurred during these past 8 weeks of summer. Our office staff checked in materials, created class lists and organized for a smooth opening. In June and July, teachers wrote world language, language arts and science curricula and carefully matched instructional strategies with the student learning outcomes we desire. We will continue to write curricula in other content areas to ensure we are meeting the state and national standards and are properly sequencing content from one grade to the next.

The buildings have been thoroughly cleaned. This is a continuous process, but one we are especially attentive to due to H<sub>1</sub>N<sub>1</sub> Flu concerns. Our custodial staff follows cleaning protocols based on high standards for school cleanliness and frequently disinfects areas often touched by children such as doors, pencil sharpeners, water fountains and desk tops. The school system will continue to work closely with the state, regional and local health departments and the Westbrook Emergency Management team to receive guidance and ensure that the community is provided with accurate and timely information.

It will be important for everyone's health that we limit the spread of influenza by watching for symptoms in our children and ourselves, staying home when ill, and using good cough and hand hygiene. The Center for Disease Control recommends early identification as the primary means to reduce the spread of influenza in schools.

I look forward to welcoming you and your children to the new school year. I hope to see you at school functions, SuperSessions, and community events. With your input, we will work together to provide a first rate education for every student.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Charles".

Patricia Charles  
Superintendent

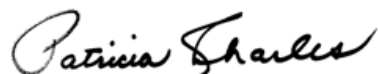
July 2009

Dear Parents,

I want to make you aware of the work Westbrook teachers have been engaged in all year as part of their meetings as professional learning communities (PLC's). I feel it is important that every educator feels part of a system of practice that is dedicated to continuous improvement. By discussing instruction regularly we will develop a common lens for examining our practices in Westbrook. By talking about our work, we stress the importance of a common vision and the power of a shared understanding about good teaching. There must be common beliefs about what the students must know and are able to do as a result of each teaching unit. This shared understanding is central to moving the district forward.

We all have our own ideas about what constitutes good instruction. With a common focus comes clearly identified performance standards and assessments. When we know what to look for in our students' work, there is consistency in our expectations. By examining our students' work together we will have the data that our curriculum is producing the desired results and whether the standards have been met. Too often teachers work in isolation. Some might call it "academic freedom". I know that a culture that invites collegial feedback and critical review will produce more effective teachers and move Westbrook Public Schools closer to our goal of outstanding academic achievement for every learner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Charles".

Patricia Charles, Ed.D.

Superintendent