

WEST MORRIS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ANTHONY di BATTISTA, Ph.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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Dear Members of the West Morris Regional Educational Community,

As a follow-up to the letters concerning H1N1 influenza from the County Health Office that we have been posting on our school and district websites, I would like to provide you with additional information that is particular to our two schools.

While there are a small number of students exhibiting influenza-like symptoms at both schools, there have been **no** confirmed cases of H1N1 flu among our students. I have spoken directly with one of our local health officials this morning to verify that we are following protocols recommended by the New Jersey Department of Health and the CDC.

Seasonal influenza is still circulating in our communities, as well as the new H1N1 influenza. Since H1N1 symptoms are similar to seasonal influenza, physicians are currently reporting cases to local health departments and treating them as they would seasonal influenza.


No public schools in Morris County have been closed due to the virus, even though clusters of influenza have been identified at several schools. Presently, local doctors are **not** routinely performing what is known as “surveillance testing” to determine whether or not the symptoms that a patient is experiencing are indeed H1N1. Instead, doctors are treating the symptoms, and our own nurses in conjunction with local health departments are following the recommended protocols of **requiring** students who exhibit flu-like symptoms to stay home for seven days or 24 hours after the symptoms disappear, whichever is longer. I was also informed that authorized testing as required by the State Department of Health for H1N1 at this time is exclusively limited to patients that are requiring hospitalization.

There are no specific guidelines for when a school should close because of an influenza outbreak, and as I mentioned no public schools in Morris County have been closed at this time. Decisions to close schools are typically made when absentee rates from a specific illness reach 15%, although this is a guideline, not a mandate. Currently, our absentee rates are normal for this time of year and certainly nowhere approaching the 15% rate.

While the influenza virus does not live long in the environment, all schools have been encouraged to institute enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces. The virus will survive between 2-8 hours after being deposited on a surface. The temporary closing of schools is not considered effective in limiting or preventing the spread of virus. However, should a cluster be identified in either of our schools, you will be notified.

The information that I have provided in this letter comes from the CDC and our regional and state health offices. If you have any additional questions, feel free to contact me, but I would also ask you to consult your physician and follow his or her direction concerning your child's health.

Sincerely yours,


Anthony di Battista