

August 18, 2009

Dear Parents:

Schools in Houston County opened August 7, 2009. Although there have been some minor issues this has been the best start of any school year since I became Superintendent. This has nothing to do with me but everything to do with the fine administrators, teachers and support persons in our school system as well as you the parent. Thank you for your dedication to an exceptional school environment.

There is one situation we are facing that needs your help. All of you are aware of the H1N1 and seasonal flu that is in our county. The Houston County Board of Education has taken every precaution available to us to ensure our students are safe and healthy. We are following the guidelines set forth by the State of Alabama Department of Public Health when caring for our children. The Centers for Disease Control website www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/h1n1/buttons.html is engaging in a community message which is available to you. This message includes four important points for any community mitigation effort in a simplified format: "Wash 'Em, "Cover It", "Keep 'Em Home!", and "Stay Home!"

As the message implies: Make sure your child washes his/her hands often, covers mouth when coughing or sneezing, stays at home if a fever or any flu-like symptoms are present, and remains at home until fever-free for at least 24 hours. It is a good idea for everyone in your family to wash their face and hands immediately upon returning home in the afternoon. This will lessen the spread of school and workplace germs to your household.

The schools will continue to isolate students who appear to have flu-like symptoms during the school day and notify parents to come pick up their child immediately. We do not have any plans to close school (following the Alabama Department of Health guidelines). Keep in mind that every case of flu is not H1N1 but professional medical care is the best option when your child is sick. Early intervention is key to a speedy recovery.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to help everyone stay happy and healthy.

Sincerely,

Tim Pitchford

TP/dh