



Lincoln Public Schools

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Superintendent

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Dear Parents:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) has acknowledged the Lincoln School Department for working closely with HEALTH to address the prevention and management of H1N1 (swine flu) in the Lincoln community. As requested by HEALTH and the RI Department of Education, we have reported absenteeism rates for all of our schools on a daily basis. This system provides real-time information on the presence of illness in our schools.

Last week, HEALTH investigated our report of an unexplained increase in absenteeism at Saylesville Elementary School. A handful of students who had symptoms of influenza-like illness (fever plus cough or sore throat) were tested for H1N1 (swine flu). The results of this testing confirmed that there are three or more students in the school who have swine flu. Because we know that swine flu is here, it is important for everyone (at home and at school) to help stop the spread of illness. The best way to prevent the spread of germs is to remember to:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.
- Sneeze and cough into your elbow.
- If your child is sick with influenza-like symptoms, please keep them at home for seven (7) days after symptoms start or at least 24 hours after symptoms have ended, whichever is longer.

The Lincoln School Department is following the recommendation of both HEALTH and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that closing our schools is not necessary. Another school in Rhode Island closed this week because its absenteeism rate was so high, the school could not effectively function or teach. That closure was not to prevent the spread of illness. This is not the case at Saylesville Elementary or at any other school in Lincoln.

We continue to promote handwashing, and access to alcohol hand gels to minimize the spread of illness. Additionally, we have taught the many members of our community how to sneeze and cough into their arm or a tissue. Please visit our website at www.lincolnps.org or the Department of Health website at www.health.ri.gov for more detailed information on H1N1.

Thank you for your support and for helping us to finish this school year on a strong note.

Sincerely,
Georgia Fortunato
Superintendent of Schools