

[NEWSLETTER to be used in school community publications]

Welcome back! We look forward to another fulfilling year with your children. We hope you had a fun and healthy summer break.

As you know, last spring Iowa had confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza. This summer there have been many confirmed cases throughout the country and worldwide. Because the virus has been shown to affect school-aged children, our school will be following a pandemic preparedness plan that was developed with the Polk County Health Department. This plan was put into effect last spring. Since we are still in an influenza pandemic we will continue the action steps we started last spring. Now it will also help deal with the onset of the seasonal fall flu season by utilizing “action steps” that reduce the spread of germs in our school. The “action steps” include:

- teaching and reinforcing proper hand washing (both soap and water and the use of alcohol-based gels)
- teaching and reinforcing proper cough etiquette (coughing or sneezing in the crook of your elbow, not your hands)
- providing appropriate hand washing supplies
- daily cleaning and disinfection of surfaces at school
- strict adherence to exclusion policies for illness symptoms

We will also continue to work closely with the Polk County Health Department to help prevent the spread of disease in our school and community. We will be holding seasonal flu shot clinics and will assist the Polk County Health Department in vaccinating school-aged children when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available later this fall.

How can you help? Please continue to teach and encourage your children to wash their hands often and thoroughly. Monitor your children for influenza-like symptoms, including fever with a cough or sore throat, and keep your child home from school for at least 24 hours after their temperature returns to normal (without the help of fever-reducing medication).

THANK YOU for your cooperation. We will continue to communicate our efforts throughout this influenza season. For more information about H1N1 and the seasonal flu you can visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health.