



Monticello Central School District

237 Forestburgh Road, Monticello, NY 12701
845.794.7700 www.monticelloschools.net

April 28, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that New York State has entered a heightened surveillance stage resulting from the presence of the Swine Flu virus that is making people sick in several states, including New York. This outbreak has been traced to original cases in Mexico. Although to date, only mild illness has occurred in the United States, we realize that many people are worried, so we are sending this letter to help address your concerns. Despite confirmed cases of Swine Flu in a private school in Queens, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open at this time.

Presently, the state and local health departments have advised us that students can continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include: fever over 100 degrees F, cough, sore throat, runny nose or stuffy nose. Additional Swine Flu symptoms may include muscle pain, fatigue, vomiting or diarrhea.

Flu spreads easily. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is important that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.

- Remind your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (*that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice*).
- Remind your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Remind your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- Remind your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!

- Help your children learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of Swine Flu in our schools. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control in our buildings.

While the current situation does not warrant school closure, if Swine Flu continues to spread and more students become ill, it may become necessary to close schools for a period of time. We are working with the Director of Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Edward Escobar who supervises the school nurses and the Sullivan County Public Health Nursing Services Department to monitor the situation here and will make all decisions in consultation with them and state officials. We will inform parents immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close schools.

If schools are closed, please do not make arrangements—such as sending children to a friend's home or group childcare—that will put them in close contact with other children. It is important to plan ahead. Have a family discussion now to consider options in advance of the event of a school closing.

Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. The following web sites may have more information and answers to questions about Swine Flu:

www.cdc.gov

www.nyhealth.gov

www.schoolhealthservicesny.com

New York State also has a 24-hour toll-free hotline at 1-800-808-1987.

For more information, please visit our web site at www.monticelloschools.net or call the PPS office at 794-0128.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Michel
Superintendent of Schools