



Subject: Information on Influenza Virus (H1N1)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome your children back to school, and hope that your summer has been an enjoyable and restful one. Back-to-school is the appropriate time to provide you with an update on the English Montreal School Board's H1N1 preparedness efforts.

The H1N1 virus, in its first wave of propagation, appears to have produced mild symptoms in Canada and more specifically in Quebec. A second wave of this influenza virus is expected during the fall or winter months.

We wish to assure you that the English Montreal School Board has placed a high priority on preparing for whatever may occur in the coming months. Last spring all of our in-school administrators took part in workshops focusing on general emergency preparedness, as well as pandemic readiness.

We are ready to respond should the need arise. Furthermore, we are in close touch with officials from the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports and local CSSS/CLSC offices to receive accurate and timely information.

The EMSB website has a special section devoted to H1N1 updates. You may wish to review the updates or articles which have been posted on this website.

Meanwhile, we wish to remind you of measures your children can take to slow or minimize the spread of the H1N1 virus, should it become prevalent.

1. If your children are sick, kindly keep them at home. Teach your children to stay at least two meters away from people who show flu-like symptoms.
2. Ask children not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth after touching door handles and other surfaces that may harbour influenza and other viruses. Please be assured that high-touch items in the school, such as door knobs and hand rails, will be cleaned more often as a means of minimizing the spread of the influenza virus.
3. Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds (the length of time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday"). Also stress the importance of proper sneezing and coughing etiquette (www.fightflu.ca): they must cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or cough into the inside of their elbow or sleeve.

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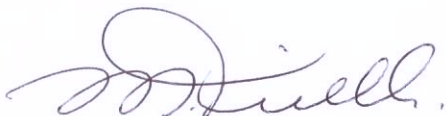
The school will integrate 'flu information' into the curriculum and provide increased opportunities for hand washing throughout the day.

4. At the height of a pandemic, parents are asked to advise the school if their children live in the same household as a hospitalized case of H1N1.
5. Parents must pick up children with flu-like symptoms as soon as they have been notified by the school. Children who are ill will remain in a supervised isolation room and may be asked to wear a mask while waiting to be picked up. They must stay home from school until they are well (approximately 7 days) and can no longer spread the infection to others.
6. Teachers will be asked to report to the administration any student who exhibits flu-like symptoms. The administration of the school and the Regional Directors will be keeping a watchful eye on daily attendance.
7. Shortly, hand sanitizers will be installed at the main entrance to all EMSB schools. These are intended for visitors to the schools, and you are kindly asked to make use of them when you enter the buildings.
8. Please note that alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not recommended for young children. Regular and frequent use of soap and water are the best defence and prevention method against the spread of the influenza virus.
9. Parents may obtain up-to-date information regarding the H1N1 situation by visiting the site: www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca.

As new information comes to light, we will provide you with periodic updates. Rest assured that we will do our very best to provide a safe and healthy environment for your children.

Please accept my best wishes for a happy and successful school year. Meanwhile, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your school administration.

Sincerely,



MARIO TIRELLI
Interim Director General
MT/MM/RM/PM/lc
September 2009