

25720 Maple Valley-Black Diamond Road S.E. • Maple Valley, WA 98038 • (425) 413-3400 • FAX (425) 413-3455
Web address: <http://www.tahoma.wednet.edu>

September 16, 2009

Dear Tahoma Parents and Guardians:

Tahoma School District is taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in Tahoma schools. We want to keep schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

We are working closely with Public Health – Seattle and King County to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take when flu occurs. Health officials tell us that the H1N1 (swine) flu that is beginning to appear is milder than what we saw last spring and is more like seasonal flu that we normally see in winter. For that reason health officials are not requiring tests to identify specific cases of H1N1 flu. Instead, it is being treated like seasonal flu, with a focus on prevention. That means we will need the help of students, parents and staff. Here are a few things you can do to help:

- **Teach children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Students in grades 6-12 may bring hand sanitizer to school. Elementary students will be asked to wash with soap and water. They may also use baby wipes, if families choose to send a dispenser of baby wipes to school; teachers will dispense baby wipes as needed.
- **Teach children not to share personal items** such as drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand is recommended when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Have a plan.** Please think ahead to anticipate how you will deal with the needs of children or other family members if they are ill with flu. If your child has special medical needs, please consult with your physician now to prepare for dealing with how the flu might affect them. Please make backup plans for childcare and also for transportation, in the event that bus service is reduced because drivers are ill.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected. Health officials tell us that unless your child is medically fragile, there is no need to seek medical attention for the flu. We will not require a doctor's note to return children to school after being absent due to flu.

Sick children will be sent home. Students who exhibit flu-like symptoms will be taken to a health room and asked to wear a face mask in order to reduce the spread of flu virus. Parents will be contacted and are required to pick up sick children promptly and take them home.

For more information about flu in our community, visit the public health site at www.kingcounty.gov or call 206-296-4600. We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Michael K. Maryanski
Superintendent

Michelle Zaleski
Tahoma Nursing Coordinator