

Office of the Superintendent
FAIRHAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Dear School Community:

I wanted to provide the school community with a factual update regarding monitoring the absenteeism of students and staff. The numbers below are for students absent due to sickness. The numbers are taken from school absences on 11/4/2009. There are not significant absences regarding the number of staff out at the schools. The majority of staff absences have been documented as family illness, which makes perfect sense regarding the elevated absences in school-aged children throughout the area.

School	Students out Sick	Total # of Students	% of Students out Sick
Rogers	13	225	5.8%
Wood	19	206	9.2%
East Fairhaven	25	437	5.7%
Hastings Middle	37	503	7.4%
Fairhaven High	60	621	9.6%

We continue to follow the Department of Public Health (DPH) recommendations that are designed to help prevent the spread of influenza in schools and should be followed all the time, not only during a flu outbreak.

- We are promptly isolating and sending home all students or staff who become sick at school with influenza-like illness. We must reiterate that all sick students and staff should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever. This fever-free period must be without the use of fever-reducing medicines, like Motrin (ibuprofen) or Tylenol (acetaminophen).
- We must reinforce that a health care provider's note recommending a child's return to school does not supersede the public health exclusion guidance.
- We continue to emphasize and remind students and staff about the importance of proper hand washing and cough etiquette in preventing the spread of diseases.
- We are diligently cleaning surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact ("high touch surfaces") with normal cleaning agents according to routine schedules.

Last week I sent home a letter that stated that we are considering all cases of flu like illness to be H1N1. While many physicians are not specifically testing for H1N1, the district has every reason to believe that H1N1 is a contributing factor to absenteeism in the district.

Our school nurses are actively dealing with this situation and should be publicly commended for their efforts above and beyond the call of duty. We will continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and DPH recommendations regarding this ever-changing situation.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Baldwin Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools