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Dear Parents and School Community Members:

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education and your local school districts have been working closely with local health officials to monitor the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) outbreak. Santa Cruz Health Services Agency, the State Department of Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have been in constant communication over the summer months to track the spread of H1N1. A vaccine to protect against H1N1 is currently undergoing clinical trials. When it is available, children will be a priority group to receive vaccinations. Until that time, it will be our **shared responsibility to limit the spread of H1N1.**

The Center for Disease control has advised that all schools should remain open. **"Schools are the best place for a healthy child"**. There are many steps that parents, teachers, and students can take to keep our schools healthy so our children can continue to learn.

- Check your children for symptoms of influenza (fever and cough or sore throat).
- Keep sick people at home until they are fever-free for 24 hours minimum without fever-reducing medications and feel well.
- Isolate them at home and do not send them to school or childcare.
- Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. And always wash their hands afterwards or use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Teach your children to stay at least six feet away from people who are sick (two arms lengths away).

To keep the flu from spreading to more people, anyone who has a fever with either a cough or sore throat are to be sent home from school immediately. Parents and guardians, please make sure your emergency contact information is up to date.

Contact your health care provider if you have questions, or if the sick person has a fever of 102° F or higher, or other signs of significant illness. Households caring for family members sick with the flu can also do the following things:

- ✓ Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
- ✓ For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- ✓ Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- ✓ Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- ✓ Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

If you have questions regarding your school's policy please contact your local school district or school nurse. Other information is available at: Santa Cruz Health Services: www.santacruzhealth.org/swineflu or <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>. Residents may also call the information line at (831) 454-4343.

CDPH Influenza page <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx>

Santa Cruz County Office of Education Website: http://www.santacruz.k12.ca.us/superintendent/flu_info.html

If we all work together, we can prevent the spread of H1N1 flu and maintain safe and healthy school campuses so our children can continue to learn.

Michael C. Watkins, Superintendent
Santa Cruz County Office of Education