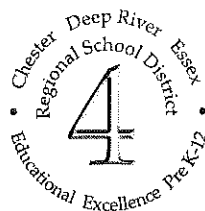


REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4
CHESTER • DEEP RIVER • ESSEX

Ruth I. Levy, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
rlevy@reg4.k12.ct.us

Tracy T. Johnston
Director of Pupil Services
tjohnson@reg4.k12.ct.us



Diane Dugas
Assistant Superintendent of Schools
ddugas@reg4.k12.ct.us

Garth Sawyer
Business Manager
gsawyer@reg4.k12.ct.us

November 3, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The H1N1 flu has become a part of our daily conversations at home, at school, in the media, and around our workplaces. The Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Region 4 Schools have seen an increase in student absences with several documented cases of H1N1, and many with symptoms that may be associated with the H1N1 flu.

This week we are seeing more of a fluctuation in student absences across our district with an increase in absences at Valley Regional High School in the past two days. Valley Regional High School absentee rates have gone from 23% yesterday, to around 30% today. John Winthrop Middle School reported around 17% of the student population absent, and significantly less numbers of student absences have been reported in our elementary schools. Student and staff absences are monitored and recorded twice daily.

We continue to work closely with our local health professionals and the Connecticut River Area Health District. We have been advised that closing schools does not prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus. Therefore, the Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Region 4 Schools will remain open. All after school activities and sports will go on as scheduled.

Valley Regional High School originally had first quarter exams set to take place tomorrow (11-4), and Thursday (11-5). We are postponing the exams until next week. Please read the memo sent from Valley Regional High School:

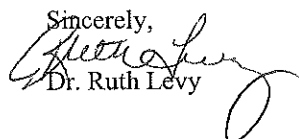
- *What are we doing about midterms?*
Midterm exams have been moved to Monday (11/9/09) and Tuesday (11/10/09) of next week. Tomorrow (11/4/09), Thursday (11/5/09), and Friday (11/6/09) will remain half days and will be used for review in preparation for exams. This will serve two purposes. First, since lunch will not be served on any of these half days, students will reduce their chances of contracting an illness as they will not be in close proximity to others in a situation where there is the potential for their hands to be near their mouths. Teachers will be available in the afternoons all three of these days to allow for students who have missed earlier review sessions to meet on an as needed basis. This time can also be used to communicate to students who are out ill via one of many electronic mediums. Second quarter classes will begin on Thursday, November 12, 2009. Despite these precautions, teachers are prepared to allow for flexibility in administering an unusually high number of make-up exams.
- *What percentage of students need to be absent for school to close?*
There is no "cut off" number that will result in closing school. The decision to close will be made as a result of many factors. Teachers have posted course information/assignments on the VRHS homework site. Students and parents are encouraged to use this, along with other forms of electronic communication, to ensure continuity of instruction if the need to close school arises.
- *If my student is sick, when should he/she return to school?*
Please do not allow your student to return to school until he/she has been fever-free for at least twenty-four hours without any fever reducing medications. Although many of us feel a need to be in school for a whole host of reasons (upcoming midterms, missing class time, games, etc.), no one is helping the situation by spreading illness to others. Please do everyone a favor and stay home when you are sick.

There are several important steps that you can take to keep you and your family healthy during flu season. Please consider:

- Teaching your children to wash their hands often with soap and water.
- Ask your children not to share personal items such as drinks, food, or utensils.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, your elbow, or sleeve instead of using your hand.

- Know the symptoms of the flu. These include fever, runny nose, coughing, body aches, headache, and feeling tired. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported in some cases.
- Please do not send your child to school if they are sick.
- Please call your child's school to report flu symptoms if your child is out ill.
- Please have your child return to school only when the fever is down for a minimum of 24 hours without fever reducing medication.

I thank you for your cooperation and patience, and will work to keep you informed of any new information that impacts our school district.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ruth Levy