

October 6, 2009,

Dear MIDS Parents,

There's currently a lot of speculation in the news recently about the possibility of an outbreak of H1N1 (formerly known as swine flu) this fall. Whether this will happen, and if it does, how severe it would be are matters of speculation at this time. But whatever happens, MIDS is prepared to address the issue and we began taking preventive measures even before students returned to school last month. Our teachers have communication plans for providing lesson materials and assignments, and they are prepared to be flexible if need be regarding makeup work. Above all, our goal is to continue to educate students, maintain a well community, and keep the school operating even if individuals within it become ill.

We are currently working on adding a special section to our website where you can find the school's H1N1 Preparedness Plan and links to other relevant and informative sites. I especially encourage you to read this plan, which is attached. It outlines our procedures and expectations for all in our small school community. Parents are asked to submit their feedback and suggestions regarding the information contained within the plan directly to me by Friday, October 16, 2009. I will update the information as needed and the plan will be implemented and published on October 19, 2009. If there is new information to be communicated, I will send email messages with the subject line of MIDS: H1N1.

For now, though, our focus is on prevention. Teachers have been reminding students about basic hygiene measures such as frequent hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette. Anyone who displays symptoms of a flu-like illness—FLI—such as cough, sore throat or stuffy nose, have been sent to the office for a temperature check. Our staff has been instructed that any student with a fever of 100° F+ must be sent home immediately. As of today, none of our students have displayed temperatures, which required that they be removed from school. Our cleaning crew has been trained in new protocols for wiping down surfaces, and supplies of hand sanitizer, tissues and disposable disinfectant wipes are on hand in classrooms and other areas of the school.

We also need your help in maintaining a healthy student body. Emphasize the things that are within our control, such as basic hygiene and getting plenty of rest. Most important, please keep any child with symptoms of FLI at home. We encourage all parents to begin routinely checking your child's temperature in the morning and keep him or her home if there is a fever and/or other symptoms are present. Additionally, to help prevent the spread of illness, if any other family member becomes ill, please keep the well child home and in quarantine for five days after exposure.

Just as we're asking all teachers to do, please develop family contingency plans at this time in case you or your children become ill. We expect the parents of any child who gets sick to pick them up and care for them at home. Who will transport your child home? What kind of childcare arrangements are available if you need to work? These are the kinds of questions to ask yourselves now—before they're needed.

In addition, the Prince George's County Health Office is currently working on a plan that would make the H1N1 vaccine available to schools. The vaccine is expected to arrive later this month and I have provided a breakdown of our student population. We will receive notification once they have decided on the distribution centers and I will pass that information on to you. While students do not have to be vaccinated since there is no legal requirement, I encourage you to study the benefits and risks of the vaccine and make the decision that you believe is most appropriate for your child in consultation with your pediatrician. The following link contains more information about the H1N1 vaccine:
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/>.

There is incredible energy and excitement among our students and staff about this school year. 2009-2010 promises to be another magical year for learning for MIDS. Although the possibility of an outbreak of the H1N1 virus threatens to interrupt our unique learning environment, we will do all that we possibly can to ensure that we continue to Prepare Tomorrow's Ambassadors...Today.

Sincerely,

Esther Donawa
Head of School



Preparing Tomorrow's Ambassadors... Today

MARYLAND INTERNATIONAL DAY SCHOOL

H1N1 Flu Preparedness Plan

Emphasize Preventive Measures

- Encourage basic hygiene practices for all in the MIDS community: staying home when sick, frequent and thorough hand washing, coughing into elbow or tissue, keeping hands away from the face, staying hydrated and getting enough rest.
- Add frequent surface cleaning protocols to routine duties of housekeeping staff: wipe down high touch surfaces such as bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, tables, and desktops.
- Encourage students to avoid “close contact;” wherever possible, provide space between desks or students in classrooms and discourage sharing of water bottles and other eating utensils.
- Support the above by making available antibacterial hand soap in all classrooms, disposable wipes for commonly used surfaces such as computer keyboards, hand sanitizers in the dining room, insistence on hand washing before meals, and by offering frequent reminders to students and others in community about prevention.
- As vaccine becomes available, follow CDC and County Health Department guidelines about inoculation

Preparedness

- Purchase additional supplies: soap/hand sanitizer, wipes, tissues, disposable thermometers, masks and gloves.
- Encourage all families to develop contingency plans for caring for children who become ill.
- Identify any students who fall into a high-risk category, and have the classroom teacher and/or staff monitor them even more closely than the rest of the student body, developing contingency plans for their attendance in the event of a flu outbreak.
- Encourage faculty members and their family members—especially those who fall into high risk categories such as the very young or old, those who are pregnant, or those who have pre-existing medical conditions—to be inoculated against the H1N1 virus.
- Develop and publish plans for the following:
 - Short term emergency lesson plans
 - Ways of addressing long term absences for faculty, and students
 - Methods of communicating with students and families about work and expectations in case of absences (by phone, email, or websites)

- Flexible policies for students who have been absent to complete and make up work

Response to H1N1

- Anyone with a fever and/or a flu-like illness (FLI, consisting of cough, sore throat, stuffy nose) is expected to stay home.
- Anyone with a flu-like illness should limit interactions with others and remain quarantined until at least 24 hours after temperature returns to normal without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- If a parent or sibling of a MIDS student has FLI symptoms, the MIDS student is expected to remain home for 5 days to guard against transmission
- In the event of a serious and widespread outbreak, decisions about cancellations of large gatherings and events, suspension of classes or closing of school will be made in consultation with the County Health Department (following recommendations by the CDC) and MID's Crisis Management Team (consisting of the Head of School, the PSN chair, a teacher representative, and one parent representative)
- Routine information about H1N1 will be posted on the school's website; breaking news will be shared in emails from the Head; crisis notification will take place through the school's email system.