

2-14-18

Dear Silver Hill Families,

Yesterday Superintendent Scully announced the death of a six year old child at Golden Hill School. The death of a child is such devastating news, and my heart goes out to her family. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers. I know how sad this must be for the entire Golden Hill school community and I have reached out to their principal Bruce Mitchinson to offer our deepest sympathy and any help we can provide to him and his staff.

We are taking all necessary steps to make sure our building is aggressively cleaned and disinfected, and there will be a complete “scrubbing” over the vacation week. There will be extra attention to student desks and areas of common use. While we will provide wipes for our classrooms, I would encourage you to send wipes to school with your child and remind them about careful hand washing. I have asked that teachers do not allow students to share belongings. This includes markers, pencils, scissors, etc. I know how difficult this will be, especially for the younger grades. But with the risk of anyone getting the flu, and the contagious nature, we need to take all possible precautions. Again, if you would like to donate any extra supplies it would be greatly appreciated so we can ensure that every child has their own individual materials. Also, with any Valentine celebrations today, we will be extra careful that food, cups, etc. are not shared.

I do not want to scare our students, but I also want them to know that keeping our “personal space” clean will help keep us safe from getting sick. We will encourage the children to wash their hands thoroughly and frequently, and to cover their coughs and sneezes. If your child is ill or has been ill during the previous night, please keep him/her home. **And PLEASE, if you have not gotten a flu shot, get it now.**

Below is a message from Dr. Maddox, Haverhill Public School’s physician.

Dr. Maddox writes...

Like all of you, I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of a 1st grader at Golden Hill.

The state department of public health has notified the public that this student died from influenza.

Mass Dept of Public Health’s announcement:

<https://www.mass.gov/node/270126>

The peak of flu season is often scary. So far there have been 64 pediatric deaths nationwide. This compares 110 last year. Flu vaccines make a difference. 80% of the children who have died so far this year did not receive a flu vaccine.

Children almost always give you some warning that they are becoming sick, usually starting with a fever of at least 100 degrees. Most children with the flu will have a mild illness, do not require a visit to the doctor and will recover within a few days. However, even healthy children can get very sick.

The following Flu Guide for Parents from the CDC gives important information and should be disseminated throughout HPS:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/family/flu-guide-for-parents-2017.pdf>

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/spanish/flu_guide_parents_sp.pdf

Here's what we, as a school district, can do to minimize the flu's impact:

1. Make sure sick children and staff stay home until they are no longer contagious

2. Take everyday precautions to prevent the spread of germs

** wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.*

** clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs*

** avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth because germs spread this way. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze*

3. Encourage people to get a flu vaccine — it's not too late!

If you have questions about your child, please call your child's primary care provider or the state department of public health: 617- 624-6000 or 617-983-6800.

I wish I had a happier message on Valentines Day, and from my heart I wish you good health.

Margaret