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Dear Spokane Public Schools Families,

Many of you are aware of the recent media coverage of the "Swine Flu" outbreak in Mexico, now spreading to the United States and worldwide. The Swine Flu, a type of Influenza A virus, is now considered a pandemic flu. As of this writing, there are suspected cases of Swine Flu in Washington State. It is important to stay informed, practice good hand washing and respiratory hygiene and develop or review your personal/family emergency preparedness plan.

Most importantly, please remember the basics of illness prevention:

- **STAY AT HOME if you have symptoms of illness.**
See a health care provider for diagnosis if symptoms are suggestive of influenza. These include: fever, cough, sore throat and body aches. Intestinal symptoms are rarely associated with this strain of respiratory influenza.
- **Cover your cough and sneeze using arm/clothing; dispose of any used tissues promptly and properly.**
- **Wash hands often and thoroughly.**
Soap and water are always best, but most alcohol-based sanitizers are effective if soap and water are not available. Use a paper towel to turn off water and to open the restroom door.
- **Avoid contact with sick people.**
If you must have contact with someone who is sick, use good hygiene.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth and shaking hands with others when possible.**
- **Avoid touching surfaces frequently touched by others.** This may include doorknobs, light switches, telephones, water faucets, countertops, television remote controls, etc.
- **Review the entertaining video, "Why Don't We Do It In Our Sleeves" at www.coughsafe.com/media.html.**

If individuals have traveled to Mexico, California, Texas or New York City in the last seven days or have been close to someone who has, and also have flu-like symptoms, please contact your health care provider. The school nurse assigned to your school is in contact with families who have traveled in these areas. We also have communicated with staff about symptoms to monitor. The safety of our staff and students is always our top priority. Our schools will remain open until we are advised to close them. Please visit our website at www.spokaneschools.org for updated information about this issue.

In situations where the media focuses on illness, rumor and fear often result. Please use reliable sources for obtaining information. Some reputable sources for information regarding the current situation and illness prevention include:

- Spokane Regional Health District (www.srhd.org/swineflu/ or 324-1442).
- Washington State Department of Health (www.doh.wa.gov) for flu prevention information as well as a "Swine Flu Fact Sheet".
- Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/swineflu/), the national health resource, for the most up-to-date information on the status of the Swine Flu outbreak.

To assist, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Red Cross have teamed up to answer common questions and provide step-by-step guidance you can take now to protect you and your loved ones:
www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness.

Thank you for taking the time to learn the facts about this issue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Stowell".

Nancy Stowell, Ph.D.
Superintendent, Spokane Public Schools

