



# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

1011 First Avenue, New York, New York 10022 Phone: (212) 371-1000 Fax: (212) 317-9236

April 28, 2009

Dear Parents,

As promised, I am writing to update you on the evolving swine flu situation, which prompted yesterday's temporary closing of St. Francis Prep in the Diocese of Brooklyn. It is my hope to provide guidance as to the steps you can take to limit exposure and to assure you we are working closely with state and local health officials to monitor and contain the situation.

Governor Patterson has activated New York State's health emergency plan and put the State on alert to quickly identify and respond to any cases of swine flu. To that end, all cases of students complaining of flu-like symptoms are being closely monitored. Please be advised that contrary to the impression possibly conveyed at Mayor Bloomberg's press conference this afternoon, none of these cases has been confirmed as swine flu and our schools remain open. Furthermore, the current situation does not warrant any school closures, particularly given the protocols set forth by the Department of Health. We will inform you immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close any school in the New York Archdiocese.

In addition, although most confirmed cases of swine flu in the United States currently involve only mild illness, the virus spreads quickly. Therefore, it is essential that no student who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms attends school or elsewhere, such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events. Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, and runny nose, and those specifically associated with swine flu include muscle pain, fatigue, and vomiting or diarrhea.

Health officials believe good hygiene habits are key to limiting the spread of infection, and I ask for your help in ensuring that your children are practicing such habits. These habits include:

- Washing their hands often, with both soap and hot water, for at least 20 seconds.
- Properly using hand sanitizer, such as gels, rubs, and hand wipes that contain at least 60% alcohol (hand wipes must be disposed of properly and always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer).

- Keeping their hands away from their face and keeping any touching of their mouth, nose, and eyes to a minimum.
- Covering their mouths when coughing or sneezing with either the inside of their elbow or a tissue (they should not use their hands).

Please note we are also consulting with health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control in our school buildings.

As previously stated, the health of your children is our primary concern. We will continue to keep you updated as more information becomes available. In the meantime, please pay close attention to media reports or visit the following websites for additional information: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), and [www.schoolhealthservicesny.com](http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com). You may also call New York's 24 hour toll-free information hotline, which is 1-800-808-1987.

Again, thank you for your cooperation in keeping your children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. McNiff". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Timothy J. McNiff, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools