

A teacher with blonde hair, wearing a patterned dress, stands in a classroom, talking to a group of young students. The students are seated at desks, some looking towards the teacher. The classroom has a green chalkboard and various educational posters on the wall.

Preparing for the Flu During the 2009–10 School Year

Questions and Answers for Schools

Q. Why do school districts, schools, teachers, parents, and communities need to plan for the continuation of learning for students during flu season this year?

As the Centers for Disease Control Guidance for K–12 schools at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/> makes clear, students may be spending time at home and outside of the classroom because of H1N1 outbreaks this school year. This may include students who become sick themselves, healthy high-risk students who are sent home out of precaution, or even entire school communities in the event of a more severe outbreak than during this past spring. In all of these cases, continuity of learning plans are essential for keeping students on track with their learning while at home.

Q. How should districts and schools go about planning to continue students' education when they are at home because of H1N1?

Districts and schools should take stock of the tools they have for delivering curricula to students outside of school. Schools should evaluate the resources and technology they have available to continue delivering learning services off site and coordinate those with the resources to which students and their families have access at home. This would include

everything from take-home course packets to online materials, Listservs, and new services, such as social networking through YouTube and Twitter. PCs, laptops, DVD and MP3 players or other audiovisual recording devices may be used. Conference calls and Internet-based webinar-style classes may be effective ways of delivering class material. Finally, if they don't already have this information on file, districts and schools should collect or update the relevant contact information for students (home and cell phone numbers, address, e-mail addresses, etc.), so that teachers can check in with students and their parents to deliver lessons.

Q. What are a few simple ways that districts, schools, and teachers can deliver instructional materials to students who will be absent because of H1N1?

Districts, schools, and teachers should be prepared to create and distribute take-home curricular packets with up to 12 weeks of material, if necessary, for students who are sent home because of H1N1. This will be one of the simplest solutions, but it requires districts, schools, and teachers to plan ahead and think about the resources necessary to create and distribute those course packets. To the extent that districts can post assignments or curricula online, they should.

Q. What other sorts of technology can be used to ensure that students at home are able to continue to learn during more prolonged absences?

Districts and schools can also deliver content via conference calls, audio recordings of class meetings, or live via webcam. Teachers can call students and parents to provide lessons, check-ins, and tips for creating a learning environment at home. It may be possible to deliver a class via podcast, webinar, or public access television. Local schools using the same curricula within a district and even schools in neighboring districts may be able to align and share resources across town or across neighboring districts.

Q. How can districts and schools engage with local business and community leaders, as well as parents?

Districts and schools should reach out to local business and community leaders to both access additional distance learning resources and encourage work-schedule flexibility for caretakers with students home from school. Businesses may be able to donate, loan, or rent

resources or low-cost technology to districts or schools for continuity of learning. Also, business leaders need to be sensitive to the schedules of workers with students dismissed from school because of H1N1. Districts and schools should also encourage parents to plan for childcare options in the event of extended school dismissals.

Q. How have other districts prepared for this?

Many schools and districts across the United States have already started preparing activities for students in the event they may be spending time at home. For example, the New York City Department of Education has created a “learn at home” Web site, complete with downloadable PDF files listing activities in all subjects for students in pre-K through grade 12. See: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/learnathome/default.htm>. And the San Diego County Office of Education and the San Diego Unified School District have posted online learning resources for students and parents, which include activities in math and science, K–12 reading lists and links to local public libraries. See: http://www.sdcoe.net/news/07-10-25_Home_learning.asp.



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