

A Letter From the Superintendent

**VALUE
HEALTH**
PROTECT AGAINST
INFLUENZA

Dear parents,

Each year as many as one in five Virginians are plagued by a contagious disease that hospitalizes 200,000 people across the nation and kills 36,000. This disease also sends over 20,000 children to the hospital every year. While this might sound like a rare “super bug,” in reality it is influenza, or the common flu.

During National Influenza Immunization Week (November 27-December 4), we are partnering with the Virginia Department of Health to advise parents and school staff about how they can help keep their children safe and healthy throughout the flu season. **While the flu can be life-threatening, it is preventable.** Since children spend the majority of their time either in school or at home, we need to ensure that they — as well as their teachers and caregivers — practice good hygiene and other preventive measures in these environments. As the superintendent of schools in [DISTRICT, CITY/STATE], I urge you and your family to practice the following simple steps to prevent the spread of the flu in our schools and in our community:

- ✓ Get vaccinated.
- ✓ Wash your hands often.
- ✓ Cough or sneeze into your arm or sleeve, not your hands.
- ✓ Stay home if you are not feeling well, and keep your child home if he or she has been diagnosed with flu.

In the United States, the flu season usually lasts from November to April, and sometimes even peaks in May. The best time to get vaccinated is now, as it usually takes a couple of weeks for the vaccine to take effect. **If November slips by and you have not gotten your children or yourself vaccinated, you still have time!** Getting the vaccine in December or later — through April — can still offer protection in most years.

A common misconception is that it is possible to get the flu from the flu vaccine. The truth is that the flu shot contains only inactive viruses — those that have been killed. **Some people may feel side effects such as body aches or a low fever, but this does not mean they have the flu.**

If we work together, we can go a long way toward curbing the spread of flu. We sincerely hope that you will take these simple preventive measures to heart. If you have any questions or need more information, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/epi/newhome.asp.

Thank you for your time and attention to this serious health concern.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
Superintendent
[DISTRICT, CITY/STATE]