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To Parents and Guardians,

The season of colds, flu and pneumonia is upon us. Although there are no epidemics reported by the CDC or the IDPH this year, we are seeing the effects of cooler weather, germs and busy schedules.

The main way these illnesses are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called "droplet spread."

This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

From the CDC: How to Stop the Spread of Germs:

In a nutshell: take care to • Cover your mouth and nose • Clean your hands often • Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too *Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.*

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

The CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

Alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work too:

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.*

- Nearly 22 million school days are lost annually due to the common cold alone. (CDC, 1996)
- Addressing the spread of germs in schools is essential to the health of our youth, our schools, and our nation.
- Students need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water, and eat good food to help them stay healthy in the winter and all year.

Our custodians are cleaning frequently touched surfaces on a regular basis to help prevent the spread of illnesses. We use Green products that are very effective in reducing the transmission of germs.