



Flu Precautions, Part II

I trust everyone has been reading your emails and checking your mailboxes about how we are to respond to this potential outbreak of H1N1 Flu. To recap some very basic things we need to tell students (and remember ourselves): if you feel ill, stay home; if you are ill at home, don't return to work/school until you are well; wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap; cover your mouth with your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.

Additional protocols have been given out by the county healthy dept and our district: if a student returns from illness we should ask them if they have had flu-like symptoms, and if they have they should be cleared by the district nurse (check with your coordinator about how this process works). As we register students, we should verify that they had not been recently ill.

If a student or staff person is determined to have had the H1N1 flu, the county health officers will close our school, and although this is highly improbable, we are organizing a plan for school closure.

Now, as always, we need to remind ourselves and tell our students, to observe basic sanitation practices, eat well and drink plenty of water (so says our guru Penny Welsh!) and get rest. Stress always compromises the immune system. Perhaps this potential health problem is a good reminder about what really matters to us and to do the things we need to do to stay healthy.

What Really Matters

A school is many things to the students who walk through its doors and to the people working there. For so many of our students our school is a place where they connect with other adults and experience a sense of community. Sometimes for us in adult education it's hard to explain this to those who want a quantifiable measure of how an adult school makes a difference. We can measure the impact of a school in many ways. But a school is not a factory, or a financial services organization, or a retail outlet, or even a complicated social services bureaucracy (although this last, admittedly, sometimes seems apt). There are no robber barons or sharkish CEO's pushing for higher production and making off with millions as a result of what happens in schools. There is no profit accounting and projection presented to stockholders in order to boost the value of shares (although, again, it sometimes seems like standardized tests are presented as such in recent years in elementary and secondary schools). What is central, what really matters in a school, is what is learned by the students and what happens in the classroom among the students and the teacher. Everything else we do in a school exists to support that transformative moment when classes begin and teachers facilitate students' *learning*.

The best teachers are those who create opportunities where the students learn how to learn and see themselves as wholly capable of achieving their goals. The best teachers, especially in adult education, access the deep funds of knowledge that students bring into the classes. The best teachers build learning experiences directly relevant to the students' needs. There is no higher skill than creating this space where students reflect on what they have and what they want, and understand how to be who they want to be. Good teachers can change lives, can be a force for justice and personal transformation, can help heal communities and divisions, and can help make our democracy strong. Good teachers can make communities healthier and more

prosperous directly and indirectly, immediately and through time. Sometimes the impact is delayed; as Christie McAuliffe said, teachers touch the future. Or as the Talmud says, when I teach my son I teach my sons' sons' sons. In this year of great concern about our current and future status as an institution, and as we inevitably worry about the economic health of our valley, state and nation, it's good to take a moment and remember why we are here at 20 Sherwood Place. We are here because of what happens when students enter a classroom, sit down, and wait for the teacher to begin... it's a powerful moment. So thank you to all of our teachers, permanent, temporary, full time, part time, young, old(er), experienced, green, in all our departments. Teaching is a science, and also an art. You are, in a sense, artists of the possible. You make a difference now and in the years to come. You change lives in ways we know and can measure, and also in ways unknown to us. Nothing is more honorable than being a good teacher. *Congratulations on this your day*

