

For www.aolp.org posting immediately
9/29/09

Special Response to Special Concerns Regarding the 2009 Flu Season

Dear Parents and Students,

In recent days, we have spoken to you several times about how we can take physical precautions to keep us all healthy as possible during flu season, e.g. washing our hands, covering sneezes, staying home if we have high fevers, not sharing cups and water bottles, etc. But I would like to say something equally important about the emotional effects of the flu, be that regular seasonal flu or the H1N1 (Influenza A) flu virus.

Because of the worldwide nature of the H1N1 flu, the main emotion that everyone experiences is that of fear. Sometimes we fear we will get sick. Sometimes we fear that it will take us longer to fully recover than the regular seasonal flu virus causes. For those of you in college preparatory high schools like the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, there is an added fear of what will happen to your grades. And because of these fears – sometimes real, and sometimes not real – unwise decisions are sometimes made. Students and those whom they know, say that college-bound students will get low grades if they stay home to take care of ourselves. Some families believe that their daughters and sons will never be accepted into college if they miss school. Students consequently delay seeking medical advice, fail to get the sleep they need, and believe that if they miss classes and tests that their chances of college admissions will diminish.

No one can say with 100% certainty that each student will get into the one college she most wants to attend. This is simply a reality of overpopulation at the most desired school campuses, and has little to do with the flu. It is a reaction driven in large part by unsubstantiated fear and unwillingness to look outside of state for good colleges and universities. But the Academy has made some changes in its ordinary academic policies in order to help you not believe what is not true. And only you can control your fears when they are based on mis-information.

First, every teacher in the school will post assignments daily. You do not have to fear that students won't know their assignments, because these will be printed on Edline every night. If they are not, a simple call to the teacher or to the department chair will remedy this immediately.

Second, any student who misses a test will be permitted to make that test up at a reasonable time after she returns to classes. Sometimes an individual teacher will give an alternative version of the test, or point out the most important concepts. But no student will lose any academic credit for being legitimately ill.

Third, if you miss more than 8 days of classes, then special arrangements will be made for you with your Academic Counselor's help. It may take you longer to get all one's work done, but there will always be a deliberate focus on what each student needs to know in preparation for final exams.

Fourth, remember to be "compassionate" and "flexible." No one likes to be sick. But if we are, then we all need to be compassionate in helping one another get notes and understand them. And we all need to be flexible in learning how to make allowances for not feeling well. All students must deal with temporary setbacks and learn to cope with the anxiety that at times results. We are not perfect people who always earn perfect grades, hand in perfect papers, and feel perfectly well every single day. Yet we can still lead happy, successful lives.

The only way this is going to happen, however, is if you communicate with those who can help you:

1. Do what your doctor tells you to do to get well. If she or he says to stay home and rest, do it. Don't come to school and both spread and pick up more viruses.
2. Check your Edline pages every day to keep up with your class.
3. Email your teachers as soon as your doctor tells you how long you may be out.
4. Get a friend or a parent to pick up the books you need to study at home.
5. Call a member of the administration if you need special help. Don't wait 5 or 6 days and then tell someone you had the flu without even having checked your Edline pages.

These are very extraordinary times, and so we are responding in extraordinary ways. Keep physically as well as possible, and keep emotionally balanced. Don't let fear – especially fear that is not based on fact – prevent you from getting better and getting back involved in school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Dolores Anchondo".

Sister Dolores Anchondo
Principal