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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Student Diagnosed with Whooping Cough at Kenilworth Middle, School System to Offer Kenilworth Students Free Vaccine Next Week

Baton Rouge, LA – East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) and Health Care Centers in Schools officials are being proactive in preventing the spread of **Whooping Cough (Pertussis) after a Kenilworth Middle School student was recently diagnosed with the infection.** They are alerting Kenilworth Middle School families of the symptoms of the disease and offering free vaccinations to students with parental approval. The vaccine is provided by the **Louisiana Office of Public Health Immunization Program.**

The student has been isolated from the school population, and classes will continue at this time according to the regular schedule. Parents will be notified by the School System of any updates in the situation. Whooping Cough is a contagious infection of the respiratory system and includes severe coughing spells that end in a “whooping” sound when the infected person breathes in.

A letter was sent today, January 28, to students and parents/guardians detailing the symptoms of Whooping Cough and other directions. The first symptoms of Whooping Cough are similar to those of a common cold: runny nose, sneezing, mild cough and low-grade fever. After one to two weeks, the dry, irritating cough evolves into coughing spells. During a coughing spell, which can last for over a minute, an infected child may turn red or purple. At the end of a spell, the child may make a characteristic whooping sound when breathing in or may vomit. Between spells, the child usually feels well.

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WHOOPING COUGH/2

If someone suspects a student may have Whooping Cough, they are directed to call their family doctor as soon as possible. To make a diagnosis, the doctor will take a medical history, do a thorough physical exam and take nose and throat mucus samples to check for B. pertussis bacteria. Blood tests and a chest X-ray also may be needed.

Because Whooping Cough is spread through sneezing and coughing, general prevention is recommended through HAND WASHING, COVERING THE MOUTH WHEN SNEEZING OR COUGHING AND STAYING AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC IF THE INFECTION IS SUSPECTED. Once infected with Whooping Cough, the patient generally is treated with antibiotics. For more information, go on line to <http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/index.html> and choose “Whooping Cough” under “Bacterial and Viral Infections.”

Otherwise, the infection can be prevented with the Tdap vaccine, although there are important exceptions and special circumstances that may prevent a student from getting the vaccine. *In the fall of 2009, the Tdap vaccine will be required for school entry. It is recommended that any child ages 11 through 18 receive the vaccine.*

In the meantime, to assist with this issue at Kenilworth Middle School and prevent the spread of the infection, nurses from Health Care Centers in Schools will be at the school Monday, February 2, and Tuesday, February 3, to give the Tdap vaccine to students **FREE OF CHARGE if they have SIGNED PARENTAL CONSENT.**

If you need additional information, please contact school Principal Viola Jackson at (225) 766-8111 or the Centers nursing director, Yolanda Lastrapes, at (225) 343-9508 or (225) 803-7373. Parents are asked to contact the school if a student or any members of the student’s family contract this infection.

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