

H1N1 Flu Preparedness and Learning Continuity for Schools

Department of Education tours VOISE Academy in Chicago Public Schools as a model

October 08, 2009 - Chicago, IL — VOISE Academy in Chicago Public Schools became the epicenter of the nation's fight against the H1N1 flu when education leaders from across the country came to observe its innovative solution offering uninterrupted learning to students during emergency dismissals due to the illness. During the visit, VOISE students simulated an H1N1 shutdown by continuing classes from home or libraries using School Town, the online learning platform designed specifically for K-12 education.

A few of the leaders attending the event were Jim Shelton, Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education for Innovation and Improvement, Susan Patrick, President and CEO of the International Association of K-12 Online Learning - iNACOL, Bob Runcie, Chief Admin Officer from CPS, and Milton Chen, Executive Director at Edutopia.

The learning continuity drill was in support of the U.S. Department of Education's efforts to encourage schools to plan for continuity of learning during extended dismissals that could result from the H1N1 flu. H1N1 can cause big disruptions in a school's calendar year; possibly extending the school year and leading to possible funding reductions for districts with attendance based funding formulas.

According to DoE recommendations, existing tools may be used to develop effective distance learning strategies and access new resource opportunities so that "schools and districts can sustain student attainment and achievement during prolonged absences or school dismissals."

VOISE uses School Town in the classroom every day to manage student assignments and collaboration, so the event was business as usual - except that the students participated remotely. School Town's secure online environment makes it an ideal solution for an H1N1

shutdown – with online assignments, chat rooms and discussion forums providing all the tools a teacher needs to continue teaching remotely. According to VOISE social studies teacher Patrick Staley, "about 90% of what we're discussing is going to be on the computer in any case, so this is a natural extension of our in-class experience."

School Town's online learning platform meets Department of Education recommendations for H1N1 preparedness in several areas by assuring student learning 24/7, providing collaborative tools for virtual class meetings, communication, and managing assignments. One teacher said "I see better class participation using School Town's chat and discussions, especially from students who don't normally participate verbally in class." Principal Todd Yarch said, "I strongly believe this will be the school of the future, but it should be the school of today!"

School Town simplifies teacher's lives by making it easy to integrate a wide range of digital curriculum and tools into daily instruction - whether in the classroom or at home during a H1N1 outbreak. At VOISE, teachers use School Town to integrate digital content from many sources based on individual student learning needs. "The time to plan for an H1N1 outbreak is before it hits," says School Town CEO Michael Kritzman. "Schools can be up and running with online learning in just a few days."

For more information on H1N1 preparedness and how School Town can help, please visit <http://www.ed.gov/h1n1flu> and <http://www.schooltown.net/h1n1>. iNACOL continuity of learning information can be found at <http://www.inacol.org/col/index.php>.

School Town is proud to partner with [Educational Tools](#), to bring learning solutions to market.

ABOUT SCHOOL TOWN

Founded in 2007, School Town's high performance K-12 learning platform engages students, delivers any content, and keeps parents informed. School Town features secure web 2.0 tools as part of the extended classroom. School Town improves student achievement and teaching efficiency. Please visit www.schooltown.org or call 877-SKL-TOWN (877-755-8696).

ABOUT EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Educational Tools is the industry leader in supplemental educational resources. Educational Tools has been advancing the experience for teachers, principals and administrators in over 10,000 schools across the country for over a decade. Please visit www.educationaltools.org or call 800-to learn more about how we are changing how educators teach, and how students learn.