



For Immediate Release

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**Superintendent Cannaday Reminds Parents
to Make Sure Children's Immunizations Are Up to Date**
Some Shots Required for Students Entering Sixth Grade

Summer is the ideal time for parents to check with their child's pediatrician to ensure that required immunizations have been received and to avoid a child not being allowed to attend school.

"While parents are usually diligent in staying on track with vaccinations for pre-school children, they sometimes forget that booster shots and other immunizations are required for older children," said Billy K. Cannaday Jr., superintendent of public instruction. "With the start of a new school year less than a month away in some areas of the state, all parents are reminded to make sure their children are fully immunized before classes begin."

Certain prescribed immunizations are required for a child to enroll in or attend public school in Virginia. Parents are responsible for providing documentation that all required immunizations are up to date or completed. These include the required doses of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis), polio, hepatitis B, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and varicella (chickenpox).

Since the start of the 2006-2007 school year, a booster dose of pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap) has been a requirement for students entering the sixth grade unless that child has had a tetanus-containing vaccine within the last five years. Last fall, approximately 3,000 sixth-grade students in 60 school divisions were temporarily excluded from attending school because they had not received the Tdap booster.

A child whose immunizations are incomplete may be admitted conditionally, provided the parent or guardian has documentation at the time of enrollment indicating that the child has received at least one dose of the required immunizations and has a written schedule for completing the remaining doses within 90 days of the opening of school. This 90-day grace period, however, does not apply to the Tdap booster, which must be received by the start of the 2007-2008 school year.

Under certain circumstances, such as homelessness or foster care, students are enrolled immediately while schools obtain immunization records or assist students in obtaining the immunizations. Some students are exempt from immunization requirements for religious or medical reasons.

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