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Dear Parents:

As the school nurse for the Batesville Community School Corporation, I have been asked by the Indiana State Department of Health and The Indiana Department of Education to provide important information to parents and guardians of students about pertussis (whooping cough) and vaccines available to prevent this serious illness.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes spread pertussis. Infants and young children are usually vaccinated against pertussis, but the vaccine becomes less effective as children get older, and vaccinated children can become infected.

Pertussis causes severe coughing fits. During a coughing fit, the infected person may be short of breath and appears frightened. Vomiting and exhaustion may follow the coughing fit. Young infants are at highest risk for developing complications from the disease like pneumonia and seizures.

Teens and adults who received the whooping cough vaccine when they were younger might have milder disease if they get sick with pertussis, but they can still spread it to others. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requires a pertussis vaccine for all 11-12 year old children, and for anyone older who did not have the vaccine at 11-12 years of age. The pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is combined with tetanus vaccine and takes the place of one tetanus booster shot. The Tdap vaccine can be given as soon as one year after a regular tetanus booster.

The Tdap vaccine is required for all students in grades 6-12. Please talk with your child's healthcare provider about the Tdap vaccine. Additional resources for families to obtain information about pertussis disease include the following websites:

The Indiana State Department of Health: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/22191.htm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm>

Sincerely,

Gayla Vonderheide RN, BSN  
Director of Health Services/ School Nurse