

More than 1,000 Waterloo students suspended from school

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Parents in the Waterloo area are scrambling to update immunization records for their children after more than 1,000 elementary students were suspended from school Wednesday because they could not produce proper documents.

The Region of Waterloo Public Health suspended the students after repeatedly warning parents of children in Grades 2 through 8 that it would do so to prevent outbreaks of preventable disease.

Lesley Rintche, manager of the region's immunization and vaccine preventable disease program, said receiving vaccinations is required under the Immunization of School Pupils Act.

The law states that children are to receive a series of needles to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles, mumps and rubella, with exemptions allowed on medical or philosophical grounds. But those exemptions must be on file.

Given the law, she said, Public Health had to insist that the children be suspended.

"This is legislation that we have to follow and it's not like one day they were asked to produce records and the next day they are suspended," Rintche said.

"We had asked for these records in September of last year, and again between November and January, and again in April, with a letter going to parents' homes with their children. Now they are finally getting the records to us and we're very happy about that."

But some school administrators said they were frustrated that Public Health created extra work for schools because the schools had to implement the suspensions and deal with the reaction of parents.
