Microsoft urges Web learning in case of swine flu

September 16 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Microsoft Corp. says it can help schools get through swine flu.

The company is promoting its free online service for storing files and collaborating on projects as a way for teachers to keep classes on track even if schools close because of a flu outbreak.

Microsoft has launched a how-to Web site that walks teachers through the steps of setting up accounts for their classes on Office Live Workspace, a free Web service. Teachers can use it to post handouts and presentations, and students can log on to get assignments, chat and work with classmates on shared files.

A few schools that have already seen swine flu outbreaks started using Office Live Workspace, and that prompted Microsoft to post tips and case studies online, said Anthony Salcito, a vice president for worldwide education at Microsoft.

"Many teachers have no idea that tools like this exist," he said.

Microsoft released Office Live Workspace in 2007 to let people with Hotmail or Live e-mail addresses log on to view and comment on Word, Excel and PowerPoint files. It was an early attempt by Microsoft to defend its turf against Google Inc. and others building free word processing programs that worked in Web browsers.

The effort drew criticism because the Office Live system didn't let users

create or edit files, actions Google already supported. Since then, Microsoft has been working on more robust Web-based versions of Office programs that are due out in the first half of 2010.

On the Net:

http://www.microsoft.com/education/h1n1

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