



March 6, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Re: COVID-19 Information Bulletin

Please review this information bulletin regarding COVID-19 and the impact it is having on our school community. Health and well-being is a priority in our school communities.

Last week all school districts in the province received guidance from the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control regarding measures for preventing and controlling respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, in schools and childcare facilities.

The Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry has recently stated to the public on February 25 that, "the risk of spread of this virus within British Columbia continues to remain low at this time." We wanted to ensure you had up to date information about the measures for preventing and controlling respiratory viruses and how they are being implemented in our District. The information will also let you know what steps you can take at home.

Prevention

There are two important ways to prevent and control respiratory viruses in school settings. The first is for students and staff who are ill with respiratory illness symptoms (fever, cough, fatigue, and/or muscle aches) to stay home from school. If your child is not feeling well, we ask that you keep them home so that they can rest and recover. As always, remember to inform the school of the absence.

The second way to prevent and control respiratory viruses is the consistent practice of good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene. Good respiratory etiquette includes covering the mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow and disposing of used tissues in a plastic-lined waste container, followed by hand hygiene. Hand hygiene is the washing of hands with plain soap and water, which is effective at removing visible soil as well as viruses.

Children in the school setting should clean their hands:

- before leaving home and on arrival at school
- after breaks and sporting activities
- before eating any food, including snacks
- after using the toilet
- before food preparation
- before leaving school

If you have a younger child, help them with hand hygiene. In schools, this supervision will be provided by teachers.

REMINDER: Masks are not necessary for people who are not experiencing symptoms. In children in particular, masks can be irritating and may increase touching of the face and eyes, which increases the risk of infection.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, water fountain push buttons) helps prevent the transmission of viruses. The District ensures daily cleaning of high-touch surfaces at all of its school sites.

NOTE: Although water fountain knobs and push buttons will be cleaned daily, consider providing your child with a filled water bottle so that they do not have to drink directly from the mouthpiece of the fountain.

Food Sharing

Students should not be sharing food, utensils, dishes, and water bottles or drink containers. Although this practice is important for preventing exposures to allergens, it is equally important in reducing virus transmission between children.

Psychological Considerations

A new virus such as the COVID-19 can create anxiety and be difficult for students/children to understand, especially if someone in their school or family is sick, or they see or hear troubling messages on the radio, internet or television. It is normal for children to feel worried and nervous and have questions.

You can reassure your children that they are safe and that there are many things they can do to stay healthy:

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if they are not feeling well.
- Cough and sneeze into arm or tissue.
- Keep hands away from face and mouth.
- Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active, and getting enough sleep.

Spring Break Travel

With Spring Break coming up, we are asking parents and staff who are travelling overseas for personal travel to please consider issues such as needing to be quarantined upon returning to Canada. The current areas of most significant concern are China, Northern Italy, Iran, Japan and South Korea. Please note impacted areas may change and expand as the situation continues to evolve. As a precaution, continue to check the [Government of Canada travel advisory](#) site frequently for updates.

Please note provincial recommendations on travel-related, self isolation:

- The Provincial Health Officer is advising people who have been to China and Iran in the last 14 days, or who have been in contact with someone who has, to call public health officials and self-isolate for 14 days.
- The Provincial Health Officer is also advising that anyone who is concerned they may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms of, the coronavirus should contact their primary care provider, local public health office or call 811. Translation services for 811 are available in more than 130 languages.

School Field Trips

Out of an abundance of caution, the District and schools have made the decision to cancel some scheduled school trips in March, including trips to Japan and countries in Europe. These trip cancellations have been communicated to students and families impacted. The District ensures students and staff purchase cancellation insurance for all school trips; parents are informed during the planning stage that trips can be cancelled at any point.

For all existing international school trips planned, the District and schools will continue to carefully consider every situation on a case by case basis. There are ongoing discussions both at the school and District level to determine the appropriate outcome for each trip.

We are continuing to take direction from the Ministry of Education and Fraser Health Authority to ensure the continued safety of students and staff. We are also monitoring federal government travel notices for updates on advisories. As with any school trip, it is a family's choice when deciding whether or not to participate.

As we approach Spring Break, we will continue to share best practices from the Ministry of Education and Fraser Health Authority to help keep students, staff and families safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gord Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gord" and last name "Stewart" clearly distinguishable.

Gord Stewart

Superintendent of Schools