

January 10, 2022

Dear Families,

Keeping schools open and operating safely remain our highest priorities. We have spent the past week getting schools ready to welcome all students back to class. This has involved reinstating some of the [health and safety measures](#) used earlier in the pandemic and making contingency plans to support schools and students in the event that staffing levels are heavily impacted by illness.

This is a long letter, but I encourage you to please read to the end. It contains information on the following important matters:

1. Potential school closures
2. Changes to contact tracing for COVID-19 in K-12 settings
3. Personal prevention measures
4. Reminders to staff and students returning from international travel
5. The role of rapid antigen tests
6. Protecting personal privacy

1. Potential school closures

Functional closures

We will be monitoring staff attendance at schools extremely closely and redeploying district staff to assist as needed. If, due to high absenteeism and an inability to cover absences, we have insufficient staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students, we may need to announce a temporary *functional closure*.

If this occurs, we will endeavour to notify you as soon as possible (via email, district and school websites and social media) and hopefully before your child arrives at school for the day. Such closures may be difficult to predict and will require consideration of many factors. As a result, there is a chance you may not learn of a closure before your child arrives at school.

A functional closure may last anywhere from one day to several days depending on the circumstances. School staff will communicate with you to let you know next steps. Staff absence levels will be assessed continually in order to decide when a return to regular in-person instruction can take place.

Please review [this infographic](#) on will happen in the event of a functional closure.

Public health closures

Administrators will also be monitoring student absence related to illness. Where there is a significant increase compared to normal absence rates, the district and school will contact Fraser Health and notify the school community. This will lead to further investigation and may result in the use of rapid COVID tests, the introduction of additional health and safety measures and/or a temporary school closure by order of the Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of COVID-19.

Important: If you call the school to report your child's absence from school, please state whether the absence is due to illness.

2. Changes to contact tracing for COVID-19 in K-12 settings

The Omicron variant spreads rapidly. As a result of higher levels of community transmission and a shorter virus incubation period, contact tracing and close contact notification by public health is a less effective measure to help minimize the spread of COVID-19.

What this means is that Public Health is no longer able to contact everyone who tests positive. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow advice from the BC Centre for Disease Control, found here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/if-you-have-covid-19>, which includes:

- [How long to self-isolate depending on vaccination status](#)
- [How to report a positive test result](#)
- [How to notify close contacts](#)

As Public Health is not contacting every person who tests positive, school exposures will not be issued by Public Health for individual cases. In the event of a declared outbreak, Public Health will issue a public notification.

Public Health will continue to work with schools if, for example, there is a significant increase in absenteeism that is atypical for the time of year, and actions are to be taken, such as notification to the parents and guardians of the affected grade or school community.

3. Personal prevention measures

It is everyone's responsibility to do their part in helping to keep our school community safe. Now, more than ever, it is important that everyone self-monitors for symptoms of illness daily and stays home if they are ill.

- Complete the [K-12 Daily Health Check](#) with your child.
- Notify the school if your child is staying home due to illness.

- Complete any reporting tool provided by public health if your child tests positive for COVID-19, including providing all school-related information requested.
- Vaccines continue to be the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 within K-12 school settings (Source: [BCCDC](#)). Everyone eligible is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Please visit: <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/> for information on registering for the vaccine and how to book an appointment.

Please ensure your child:

- Wears a [well-fitting mask](#) in all public indoor settings including schools. Unless they have a mask exemption, all students and staff in schools are expected to wear a mask by [Order of the Provincial Health Officer](#).
- Keeps their distance from others
- Practices proper hand washing and respiratory etiquette

4. Reminders to families and students returning from international travel

On December 15, 2021, Canadians were advised to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada, regardless of vaccination status: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices/226>.

For those returning to Canada, parents and guardians are reminded that:

- Unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children and youth up to and including 17 years of age are subject to the 14-day quarantine requirement.
- During quarantine, these children are not to attend school in-person.

Families planning to travel or have returned from international travel should check this website for the most up-to-date quarantine and testing requirements: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-vaccinated-travellers-entering-canada>

5. Role of rapid antigen tests

With an additional supply of rapid tests for schools expected in the coming weeks, the Ministry of Education continues to work with the PHO and Ministry of Health to determine how these will be used in K-12 settings. It is expected that symptomatic teachers and staff will be prioritized.

6. Protecting personal privacy

Recent public health guidance recommends those who test positive for COVID-19 notify those whom they live with, or who they've had intimate contact with. To protect personal privacy, schools cannot release individual contact information for the purpose of an individual (staff, student or parent/caregiver) seeking to notifying others of their test result or notify others on an individual's behalf. Anyone who has tested positive using a rapid test should complete the online reporting tool provided by public health, and provide all school-related information requested.

For more information on the enhanced health and safety measures in place at our schools and district sites, please review the [Delta School District Communicable Disease Prevention Plan \(updated January 2022\)](#). In addition, [BCCDC](#) continues to provide trusted information about COVID-19, including how to protect yourself, your family and your community, and what to do if you suspect you have the virus.

Despite the challenges arising from the increase in COVID cases, the increased health and safety measures and recent terrible winter weather conditions, we are very excited to see all students back in school this week. Our mission is to inspire and nurture thriving, future-ready learners and I know that staff, whatever their role in the district, take great joy in putting this into action each and every day.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to your school principal or the district if you have any questions or require additional support.

Sincerely,



Doug Sheppard
Superintendent of Schools