

August 24, 2021

Dear North Vancouver School District Community,

Earlier today, Minister of Education Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training Anne Kang, and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry held a joint news announcement regarding the updated COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 schools for the start of the 2021/2022 school year. Details of the announcement are available [HERE](#).

My update today is intended to provide you with highlights of the updated K-12 guidelines, including resource links; school ventilation updates; information concerning classroom alternatives; and upcoming communications. I hope that in providing you with this update, the school district community can continue to feel confident that based on the ongoing collaborative efforts and updated recommendations of the Ministry of Education, public health experts, and the K-12 education steering committee, and the school district community's collective efforts, students and staff will return to safe and healthy learning environments on Tuesday, September 7.

COVID-19 Guidelines for K-12 Schools

Today's announcement of the updated COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 schools confirmed a return to full-time, in-person teaching and learning, and the resumption of sports, music and other much anticipated extracurricular activities. Highlights include:

- *Vaccinations.* According to public health, **vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities**. Public health and the North Vancouver School District continue to strongly encourage all British Columbians aged 12 and over, and particularly residents of the North Shore, to be fully vaccinated (i.e. receive 2 doses) to protect themselves and those around them. Registration is available:
 - Online through the [Get Vaccinated portal](#).
 - By calling 1-833-838-2323. Translators are available.
 - In person at any [Service BC location](#).

People can also be immunized at [drop-in vaccine clinics](#) throughout the province.

- *Staying Home when Ill and the Daily Health Check.* To reduce the likelihood of coming to a school or school district site when ill, students, staff and other adults (e.g. visitors) are required to complete a daily health check prior to entering the building.
 - Families and students can use the [K-12 Health Check app](#).
 - Staff and other adults can refer to the BCCDC's [When to get tested for COVID-19](#) document.
 - Staff, students and families can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#), call 8-1-1 or their health care provider.
 - As a reminder, students, staff or other adults must stay home when ill or when required by public health to self-isolate.
- *Masks.* All students in grades 4 to 12, K-12 staff, and visitors will be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas of schools, including when they are at work stations/desks.
 - Students in kindergarten to grade 3 are encouraged to wear masks in all indoor areas of a school.
 - In a grade 3/4 combined class, the mask requirement will apply to all students, including those in grade 3.
 - Exemptions to the mask requirement are listed [HERE](#), starting on page 20.
- *Cohorts.* Also known as learning groups, these are no longer recommended by public health as a COVID-19 mitigation measure and will not be used.
- *Physical distancing.* While public health no longer recommends strict physical distancing of two metres, schools will work on strategies to help with respecting personal space, including using available learning spaces and taking students and learning opportunities outside, where and when possible.
- *COVID-19 School Exposure Notifications.* If a student or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19 and potentially infectious while at school, public health (Vancouver Coastal Health) will continue to investigate and work closely with the school district and schools on next steps (i.e. timely action and communication).

Resource Links

I encourage you to take the time to review the following resources, which provide detailed information about the updated COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 schools:

- [Ministry of Education COVID-19 Safe Schools website](#)
- [Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#). This document was developed by the BCCDC and Ministry of Health.

- [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#). This document was developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BCCDC, Indigenous rights holders and education partners including teachers, parents/guardians and school leaders to outline the principles and requirements for maintaining safe learning environments. These guidelines build on the above-noted *Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools*.

School Ventilation Updates

The North Vancouver School District has budgeted over \$3.6M on ventilation upgrade projects across the school district (we supplemented \$1.6M of federal funding with an additional \$2M from annual facilities grants and other operating funds). Many of these projects have already been completed, and major upgrades at seven elementary schools are scheduled to substantially complete for the start of the school year. When all project work is completed, the school district will have provided mechanical ventilation for all classrooms, including portables. In addition:

- Wherever possible, MERV 13 filters have been integrated into existing systems and specified with new equipment.
- Air conditioning (HVAC) systems will continue to operate with extended operating hours and maximized levels of outdoor air intake.
- All new ventilation systems will be integrated into our building automation system, which will enable centralized control and continuous monitoring of performance.

We are committed to ensuring heating, ventilation and HVAC systems are designed, operated and maintained to Occupational Health and Safety and WorkSafeBC standards. Please look for additional updates in future Superintendent Reports.

Classroom Alternatives

We recognize some families, for their own personal reasons, are not prepared to send their children back to school for in-person learning. For those families, the classroom alternative learning options available include:

- *Online Learning*. [Online learning](#) programs and/or courses are offered at both public and independent online learning schools throughout the province. [North Vancouver Online Learning](#) offers core academic courses in grades 8 and 9, and academic and elective courses in grades 10, 11 and 12. Registration for North Vancouver Online Learning resumes on September 7, 2021.

- *Homeschooling.* Before registering for [homeschooling](#), which must occur by September 30 of each year, families are encouraged to read the important information shared on the Ministry of Education website. Furthermore, families should consider that *registered homeschoolers who then choose to return to the NVSD public education system, while able to return to a school within the NVSD system, are not guaranteed a return to their current NVSD school.*
- *Hospital Homebound.* Families with a child who is immunocompromised or has a serious medical condition may be able to access the Hospital Homebound program. Families should reach out to the principal of their current school to discuss available options and support.

Upcoming Communications

Within the next week, you can expect the following, with respect to communication:

- *Permission forms.* Each year, families must complete various forms for their children for the new school year. Three of these forms must be completed online. Before the end of next week, families will receive an email for each of their children from the school district with instructions. Please complete these forms right away to ensure a smooth start to the school year. Your child's school will also provide paper-based forms that need to be completed promptly and returned to school.
- *School-level communication.* Leading up to the start of school, families can expect to receive communications from your child's school. Your school principal and/or teacher will be sharing information concerning back-to-school information that is school-specific, including information regarding class and/or course placement.
- *District-level communication.* You can expect to receive communications from me, including regularly scheduled Superintendent's Reports over the coming weeks.

As we look forward to welcoming students and staff back to schools, know that the health and safety of our students and staff remain a top priority for the North Vancouver School District. Thank you for your ongoing trust, support and patience in your school district community.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools