



School District No. 71 (Comox Valley)

Office of the Superintendent

607 Cumberland Road
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 7G5
Fax (250) 334 5552
Telephone (250) 334 5532

March 4, 2020

Dear staff, students and families

As the outbreak of COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus continues around the world with a rising number of new cases confirmed daily, Comox Valley School District has been remaining vigilant, monitoring the situation in consultation with Vancouver Island Health Authority and the Provincial Health Officer of British Columbia (PHO).

Fortunately, the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in British Columbia still remains low and, to date, there are no confirmed cases on Vancouver Island. Nevertheless, with the rising number of reported cases elsewhere, there is cause for concern with respect to international travel.

With recent Government issued travel warnings Comox Valley Schools has had to make the difficult decision to cancel overseas travel to China and Italy. Germany is being closely monitored with a decision being made by Friday, March 6.

What can we do now as a school district and a community to safeguard against the spread among students and families? At present the Public Health Agency of Canada and PHO do not recommend school closure strategies for the prevention of COVID-19.

The recommended approach is proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. The best defence is to continue to educate staff, students and visitors to follow well established hygiene practices, including handwashing, coughing into the elbow and staying at home if the following are experienced within the past 24 hours: fever, vomiting, chills, tiredness and and/or diarrhea.

To encourage proactive hygiene practice, the school district has restored supplies of hand sanitizer at all of school sites. Our District is following these steps and measures as identified in the Public Health Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs (Feb 23, 2020). The document produced by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control is included with this letter.

Along with encouraging proper hand hygiene and staying home when unwell, the PHO also advises travelers to conduct risk assessments in advance and consider postponing trips to impacted areas - while noting that impacted areas are changing as COVID-19 continues to evolve.

It is our intent to share important links to help families make decision around travel. All current health-related travel notices can be found on the Government of Canada website at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice>. The Government of Canada does caution that for all destination, whether the risk is high or low, the decision to travel is your choice and you are responsible for your personal safety abroad.

As a reminder, any student, staff or volunteer working in schools who is concerned that they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus, contact your primary care provider, local public health unit or call 8-1-1 (HealthLink BC).

We encourage all families and our staff to monitor the situation, as well and gather as much information as necessary to make important decision for your family, your home and your workspace. Here are two additional recommended links to follow:

- Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus>; and
- BC Centre for Disease Control: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel)).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Demeo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Demeo
Superintendent of Schools
School District No. 71 (Comox Valley)