

## Here's what you need to know:

- Health Minister Adrian Dix said at today's press conference that there will be an announcement about BC schools tomorrow (Tuesday March 17). We will provide an update when new information is received.
- In accordance with instructions of the BC health authorities and the Ministry of Education we are still making plans in the event that classes will resume on Monday March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- In order to best protect the students and staff in our schools, we ask that all school families travelling out of the country over spring break honor the recommendations established by the Ministries of Health and Education at this time by self-isolating for 14 days upon return to Canada.
- We are requiring that all faculty and staff who have travelled outside of Canada also self-isolate for 14 days.
- Similarly, we ask that all community members self-isolate at the outset of any symptoms of illness, even without confirmation that the illness is related to COVID-19. This includes family members of those who are showing signs of illness.
- Students who show signs of illness during the school day will be isolated immediately and sent home.
- We will be deciding how to best handle each scheduled school event for the remainder of the school year in a manner that best reflects the safety of our students and community. Gatherings of more than 50 have been banned, but we will also consider how to manage smaller gatherings. Please check future newsletters for details.
- Specific janitorial services have been put into place at Sunrise to ensure that appropriate sanitation levels are achieved and maintained.
- At school, we will be practicing enhanced safety precautions and social distancing from the perspective of two of the core competencies that students are developing: Personal Awareness and Responsibility and Social Awareness and Responsibility.
- Re-Registration dates previously announced are being delayed one month. New dates are:
  - Re-registration appointments/2<sup>nd</sup> deposit will take place from May 4-22
  - Re-registration deadline is now May 29

## Message from the Head of School

# Coronavirus Update

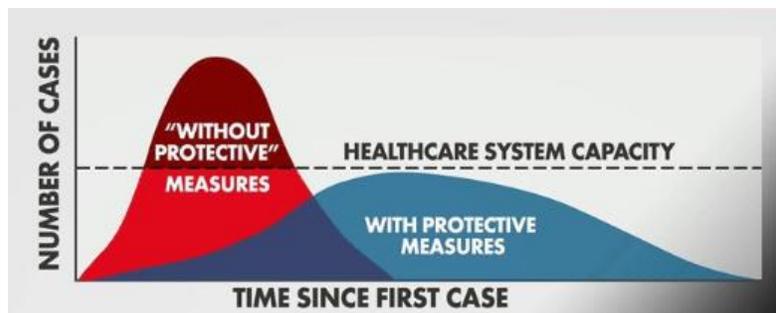
In our previous newsletters, we have published the most recent information received from the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) and the Ministry of Education, who are liaising with the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Officer (PHO) in tracking the development of COVID-19 cases in BC and the risk of infection.

In the last week, there has been a significant shift in the guidance being offered by these health authorities. On March 12<sup>th</sup>, BC's PHO, Dr. Bonnie Henry, urged British Columbians to be proactive in "flattening the curve" of outbreaks of COVID-19 by adhering to specific strategies, including limiting non-essential travel outside of Canada, self-isolation when returning from out-of-country trips, and increased social awareness of social distancing, such as limiting attendance at events to less than 250 individuals.

As soon as it became clear that BC would be seeing impacts from the coronavirus, the Board of Directors formed an ad hoc committee, including a medical doctor, who are charged with tracking the progress of this threat and recommending actions as necessary. We have been monitoring the situation closely and would like to share the school's current plans and our specific understanding of the complex issues involved, while recognizing that the situation is shifting on a daily basis.

### Background

If you're like me, you've already spent many hours informing yourself of the spread and dangers of the coronavirus. One website I've referenced is the Worldometer website (link below), which provides current data on the spread of the disease worldwide, including information about country and age impacts. You've probably also seen a version of the "flatten the curve" chart:



This chart is a little misleading in that it seems to indicate that the spike begins immediately rather than that the few early cases rise gradually for awhile, then explode exponentially. It seems that we are fortunate in BC to still be in the relatively early days, while gaining from the

experience of those in areas that are already spiking so we are still able to take protective measures as necessary.

From the experience in other countries, we know that it is crucial to slow the spread in order to avoid overburdening our hospitals, so that the people who require medical intervention can receive the help they need. Being responsible for the health and well being of students at a PreK-8 school, I have been most interested in the research regarding the risks related to children up to age 15. In the months since the initial outbreak, only 1.2% of those contracting the virus have been teens, and 0.9% were 9 or younger. The death risk skews older even more strongly, showing an extremely low mortality rate (comparatively) for individuals up to 40 years old and no known fatalities for children under 9, as seen in this chart:

AGE	DEATH RATE confirmed cases	DEATH RATE all cases
80+ years old	21.9%	14.8%
70-79 years old		8.0%
60-69 years old		3.6%
50-59 years old		1.3%
40-49 years old		0.4%
30-39 years old		0.2%
20-29 years old		0.2%
10-19 years old		0.2%
0-9 years old		no fatalities

### Possibility of School Closure

Health Minister Adrian Dix said at today’s press conference that there will be an announcement about BC schools tomorrow (Tuesday March 17). We will provide an update when new information is received.

In accordance with instructions of the BC health authorities and the Ministry of Education we are still making plans in the event that classes will resume on Monday March 23rd.

As a Group 1 independent school in BC, we are required to make decisions about closing our school in cooperation with both the Ministry of Education and our independent school association (the Associate Member Society of FISABC (AMS)). We are guided by the Ministry of Education’s “Pandemic Response Framework and Planning Guidelines” in these deliberations. Our understanding is that the schools that are receiving approval to extend their spring breaks are those that include many international students returning from other countries.

We are also cognizant of the impact to families of a sudden, prolonged closure of the school and will strive to provide a safe and healthy school environment for as long as feasible.

### Self-Isolation

BC's top health authorities are recommending "against all non-essential travel outside of Canada, including to the United States. Effective today (March 12), anyone who chooses to travel outside of Canada will be asked to stay away from work or school for 14 days upon their return. We know that this is a voluntary measure, but it is our expectation that people will follow this direction as part of their civic duty."

We are requesting that families that have travelled outside of Canada over the spring break honor this recommendation and keep their children at home when school resumes. Please contact your teacher(s) and the school office to advise of these absences and the expected return date (based on the date you returned to Canada).

We are requiring that all teachers, staff and substitutes who have travelled outside of Canada do the same and are currently making plans for replacing these teachers in the classroom. Fortunately, there don't seem to be many, although we are still waiting to hear back from everybody. On Friday, we will update you on any teachers who will be away for the required two weeks.

Self-isolation is also requested of all community members (faculty, staff, parents, students) if you begin to feel ill or a family member is feeling ill. The symptoms of the coronavirus vary by individual, especially in the early days of the illness, and may present as a seemingly minor illness (such as, but not limited to, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, fatigue). Apparently, the more serious symptoms of fever, shortness of breath and dry, hacking cough may develop later. The health authorities are advising that individuals self-isolate when even minor illnesses develop as it is possible that the coronavirus could be the cause. So, in the coming weeks, please do not send your child to school if they show any signs of illness.

In the event that students start to feel unwell during the school day, and due to the fact that our school lacks an appropriate space to properly isolate sick children, we kindly request that parents, caregivers and guardians ensure that they can be contacted by the school easily and are able to pick up their children as required in a timely way.

### Large Gatherings

Gatherings of more than 50 people (as of today's announcement) are also being banned by the BC health authorities. We will be making a determination how to best handle each scheduled school event (including those under 50) for the remainder of the school year. Please check the school newsletter for announcements.

### Janitorial Services

Sunrise Waldorf School is fortunate to be in partnership with Clean Sweep Janitorial Services. Dave Smith of Clean Sweep is very proactive in regard to school safety and has been in conversation with the BC CDC to determine the best practices for enhanced cleaning in

response to the coronavirus. Enhanced procedures are being put into place at Sunrise to ensure appropriate sanitation levels are achieved and maintained.

Dave has also passed along a number of suggestions he received from the CDC to improve safety during this outbreak. Classroom doors will remain open as much as possible so that door handles don't need to be used so often. Windows will be cracked to ensure adequate air flow in each classroom. And, of course, teachers will ensure that students are washing their hands regularly and covering their mouths with their elbows when they cough or sneeze.

### Re-registration

Re-Registration dates previously announced are being delayed one month. New dates are:

- Re-registration appointments/2<sup>nd</sup> deposit will take place May 4-22
- Re-registration deadline is now May 29

### Temporary Changes in School Culture

We will also be practicing social distancing at Sunrise. Although eliminating the practice of shaking hands in the morning and at the end of the day, for instance, will be missed in the coming weeks, this is an opportunity to concentrate on two of the core competencies which our students are learning:

- Personal Awareness and Responsibility

Personal Awareness and Responsibility involves understanding the connections between personal and social behaviour and well-being; it encourages people to make constructive and ethical decisions and act on them.

- Social Awareness and Responsibility

Social Awareness and Responsibility involves the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of connections among people, including between people and the natural environment. Social Awareness and Responsibility focuses on interacting with others and the natural world in respectful and caring ways.

There are some in our community, either elderly or with compromised respiratory or immune systems, who are at great risk if we don't "flatten the curve" as a community. This is calling on each of us individually to make personal lifestyle sacrifices in service to others, even without knowing if the sacrifice is really necessary. As we've already seen in other countries, the medical system can be overwhelmed quickly, leading to unnecessary deaths for those who are compromised but are unable to receive necessary support.

Our teachers will continue to develop creative approaches to bringing this learning and practice to the students in a conscious way that recognizes their developmental level while minimizing anxiety and encouraging compassion for others.

We will continue to update you as events develop. I will end with a poem that is being shared widely at this time with permission of the author:

## Pandemic

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.  
Promise this world your love--  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

--Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

### Useful Links:

Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN): Information for Families in Difficult Times

<http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/family.php>

Worldometer: COVID-19 Coronavirus Outbreak Data

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-cases/>

Most recent (March 14) daily coronavirus update by PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6651652/watch-b-c-s-daily-coronavirus-update-with-dr-bonnie-henry/>

Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

BC Centre for Disease Control

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>

CDC Website on managing anxiety and stress

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F coping.html)