



A Message re COVID-19

Dear staff, students and families:

As you well know, the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus continues to spread around the world, including here in North America. We remain vigilant and continue to take our lead from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. At present the Provincial Health Services Authority and the Provincial Health Officer do not recommend school closure strategies for the prevention of COVID-19. Instead, the recommended approach emphasizes proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Our approach to date has been to ensure that, as with flu season every year, we remind staff, students and volunteers of the importance of standard precautions. According to the Centre for Disease Control those precautions include:

- Avoiding close contact
- Staying home when you are sick
- Covering your mouth and nose (cough into your elbow)
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces
- Practicing good health habits (sleep, drink water, etc.) and,
- **MOST importantly, practicing good hand hygiene by washing your hands well and frequently and/or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**

As a school district we are reminding everyone of these important habits, and we are ensuring that all of our staff are supported in ensuring the usual high standards of cleanliness for our facilities. We are also prepared to do higher levels of cleaning and disinfecting as and when the need arises. To encourage proactive hygiene practice, the school district has ensured adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, soap, tissues and paper towel at all of our school sites and provided alcohol-based wipes for high contact areas such as computer keyboard surfaces.

As a reminder, any student, staff or volunteer working in schools who may be concerned that they have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus, contact your primary care provider or local public health unit, or call 8-1-1 (HealthLink BC). Health authorities are urging people to stay home if they experience fever, vomiting, chills, tiredness and/or diarrhea.

From a school system perspective, the updated B.C. Provincial Pandemic Coordination Plan is available online, and outlines government's strategy for cross-ministry coordination, internal and external communications and business continuity. The Plan is supported by a new Deputy Ministers Committee that will support a cross-government approach to addressing COVID-19. Within the updated Plan, priorities for K-12 education include minimizing disruption of services

while ensuring student and staff safety with a focus on communications, staffing and continuity of instruction. The Plan references the Pandemic Response Framework and Pandemic Planning Guidelines for School Districts and the Provincial Health Officer's School and Daycare Closure Guidelines. These documents can be viewed at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/provincial-emergency-planning/pandemic-provincial-coordination-plan.pdf> and http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_schools_childcare_guidelines.pdf.

In terms of student travel, we are told that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in British Columbia remains low, yet we know that there is cause for concern in certain parts of the world. Accordingly, we have cancelled ADSS's scheduled student trip to Europe and continue to monitor travel advisories for the upcoming USS trip to Guatemala. If you are travelling during the upcoming spring break, we encourage you to check health-related travel notices at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>. Further information relating to Spring Break travel for students in British Columbia can also be found in the Provincial Health Officer's letter to the Deputy Minister at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20200306/spring-break-guidance---march-6-2020.pdf>.

We encourage all families and our staff to monitor the situation and gather as much information as necessary to make important decisions for your family, your home and your workplace. We will continue to take guidance from health authorities and post updates on the School District 70 website as we receive them.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Smyth".

Greg Smyth
Superintendent of Schools