



SCHOOL DISTRICT 78 FRASER-CASCADE

EVERYONE PULLING TOGETHER

Aug. 24, 2022

Dear Fraser-Cascade Staff Members,

Welcome back to the Fraser-Cascade School District. It has been quite the challenging past two years has it not? We hope that you have had a restful summer. While the COVID-19 epidemic is still part of our reality, we are moving towards a “new normal” of working with the safety protocols and precautions of a regular school start up. We remain optimistic that we will be able to celebrate a regular school year with all of the positive learning activities, extra-curricular events and school projects that make our district special. The Ministry has indicated that:

COVID-19 will continue to circulate in our population, including within K-12 school settings; however, with high immunization rates in BC, as well as emerging treatment options for people at higher risk of serious disease, we can transition to managing COVID-19 as we do other serious respiratory infections in the community. Public health continues to review emerging evidence and monitor cases and transmission trends of COVID-19 to determine if actions should be taken to prevent COVID-19. Guidance will continue to be modified as needed as we transition from emergency response to the pandemic to the recovery and readiness phases in the next few months.

The Ministry of Education has worked with Indigenous rights holders and K-12 education and health partners to build on public health guidance to establish the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 School Settings](#). These Ministry of Education guidelines must be followed by schools and school districts, including if there are any differences between them and the public health guidance. BCCDC is the primary source of information about COVID-19 in B.C. Resources on the [BCCDC website](#) can be used to support learning and to respond to questions from school communities.

The following ministry guidelines will be followed in our schools:

Recommendations for Individuals

Vaccines

Vaccines are important tools to protect against many serious communicable diseases. Vaccination protects from serious illness due to COVID-19 and is the most effective way to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our communities. It is strongly recommended that adults interacting with children be fully vaccinated. All COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada protect against serious complications, including from the omicron variant. It is important to encourage all students and staff to have up-to-date COVID-19 vaccinations. More information about COVID-19 vaccines is available from the [BCCDC website](#). Students and staff are also encouraged to ensure they are up to date on [all recommended vaccines for other communicable diseases](#).

Health Awareness

School administrators should ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that they should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities. School administrators can support this practice by communicating the importance of everyone doing a personal health check.

A health check means a person regularly checking before coming to school to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness (including but not limited to COVID-19 symptoms) that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities. This should prevent spread of communicable diseases, such as COVID-19, within school settings. Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

What To Do When Sick?

The management of COVID-19 in the community is now more aligned with the management of other serious respiratory infections. Staff, students, or other persons in the school setting who are exhibiting [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should stay home until they are well enough to participate in regular activities. Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved enough to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (ex. acetaminophen, ibuprofen).

The [When to Get Tested for COVID-19 resource](#) or the [B.C. Self-Assessment Tool](#) provides more information on whether you should get a test for COVID-19. If you are unsure or concerned about your symptoms, connect with your health care provider or call 8-1-1. Staff, children, or other persons in the school setting who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the guidance on the [BCCDC website](#) regarding length of self-isolation. They can return to school when they no longer need to self-isolate as long as symptoms have improved and they are well enough to participate in regular activities. Schools should not require a healthcare provider note (a doctor's note) to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practice.

If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness at school and is unable to participate in regular activities, they should be supported to go home until their symptoms have improved. Appropriate infection control precautions should be taken while the person is preparing to leave the school premises, including use of appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of surfaces soiled with bodily fluids. They may use a mask if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

Hand hygiene

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an [effective hand sanitizer](#) reduces the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene and schools should facilitate regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands. To learn about how to perform hand hygiene, please refer to the BCCDC's [hand hygiene poster](#).

Respiratory Etiquette

Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.

- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings

The decision to wear a mask beyond when it is recommended by public health is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The decision by staff and students to choose whether they practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from [BCCDC](#).

PPE When Providing Student Services

Those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities that require them to be in close proximity to a student should follow routine infection control practices needed for general communicable disease prevention.

Recommendations for School Settings

Ventilation and Air Exchange

Continue to ensure all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained as per standards and specifications for ongoing comfort of workers ([Part 4 of OHS Regulation](#)), and that they are working properly. Open windows when the weather permits if it doesn't impact the functioning of ventilation systems. Taking students outside more often is no longer necessary for communicable disease prevention.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces should occur in line with regular practices and when visibly dirty.

Gatherings & Events

School extracurricular and social gatherings and events (including those occurring within and between schools), regardless of location, should occur in line with the guidance in this document, as well as any applicable local, regional, or provincial public health recommendations and Orders. Schools can transition to regular practices for indoor gatherings and events in line with [Ministry of Education expectations](#).

Space Arrangement

In learning environments, schools can return to classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

Visitors

Schools can return to their normal practices for welcoming visitors.

Transportation

For school buses, schools can return to normal seating and onloading/offloading practices.

Community Use of Schools

Schools can return to normal practices for the community use of schools.

You should expect information about school start up from your school-based Principal or site-based manager over the next few days.

In addition to our health and safety plans, we are excited about many new staff members who have joined our district and major initiatives that continue to move us forward. Many of these initiatives are also well aligned with Ministry of Education directions.

1. Indigenous Education, Truth and Reconciliation and Equity in Action
2. A Centralized Approach to Inclusive Education with Increased Numeracy and Literacy Intervention
3. Increased Mental Health Supports for Students
4. A Shift Towards Standards-Based Grading Aligned with the New Ministry Reporting Order
5. Increased Trades and Career Opportunities for Students
6. Ant-Racism Training

Additionally, the Ministry of Education is now known as the Ministry of Education and Child Care. This will have significant implications for our district as we look to create increased supports for Child Care and early learning opportunities for our students. I hope to meet with school and district staff at upcoming staff meetings to discuss the district and ministry initiatives in the fall.

It is hard to believe that I am starting my third year as Superintendent of Schools. We are proud to have made Agassiz our new home community and are enjoying working in a district with so many dedicated staff members. This year, my hope is to connect with more staff members to hear about your professional goals. Learning about your family and history in the district are other conversations I would enjoy having with you. I am open to meeting with all members of our district to truly live our district motto of *everyone pulling together for the achievement of all learners*.

I look forward to an exciting year with you.

Sincerely yours,



Balan Moorthy
Superintendent of Schools