

January 20, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am reaching out this week to share with you updates we have received from Public Health and the Ministry of Education regarding our collective ongoing response to COVID-19 and the measures in place that are designed to support safe school operations and the continuity of teaching and learning for students and staff.

Updated COVID-19 Resources

As noted in the [COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators and Staff: Management of School-Associated Activity](#) (page 1), public health management practices for COVID-19 activity have transitioned to established practices for other circulating viral illnesses with similar transmission characteristics. This includes individual self-management (i.e. individuals care for themselves and engage with their health care providers when needed), with Public Health focused on identifying and responding to larger clusters and outbreaks.

As COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community, and with schools reflecting what is happening in the community, I ask that we continue to work together to keep our schools open and our students and staff teaching and learning together. Actions we can continue to take to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in our schools include:

- Completing a [daily health check](#) and self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staying home when ill.
- Following [provincial restrictions](#).

The BCCDC continues to provide trusted information about COVID-19, and the North Vancouver School District will continue to follow its published and available guidance*. Please refer to the following links for information on:

- [What to do if you have COVID-19](#)
- [Self-isolation and self-monitoring and for how long](#)
- [Who is considered a close contact and how does contact tracing work](#)
- [How to notify your close contacts if you test positive for COVID-19](#)

These resources have also been posted to our new [BCCDC Resources – COVID-19](#) web page. Families should carefully review these resources when determining how long to self-isolate or self-monitor and when their children can safely return to school.

**We recognize Public Health guidance continues to change and conflicting information may have been announced. However, Vancouver Coastal Health has directed the school district to refer to published BCCDC resources until its Rapid Response Team can prepare print-friendly resources for families and staff, which we will distribute to our school communities when published.*

COVID-19 Protocols: Management of School-Associated Activity

Following the January 7, 2022, release of the [COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators and Staff: Management of School-Associated Activity](#), which provides school and district staff and administrators with information on roles and responsibilities in managing school-associated COVID-19 activity, school districts have been working closely with their local health authorities to ensure their school communities are notified when there is an increased risk exposure to COVID-19.

Furthermore, school district and school staff are regularly monitoring student and staff attendance levels to be able to respond to any changes in attendance that would potentially signal the need a move to online learning or, as a last resort, for a functional closure for a period of time. As I had shared with you in the January 13, 2022, [Superintendent's Report](#), we are committed to providing those impacted by such a decision with timely communications so that arrangements can be made by all parties.

Rapid Antigen Test Deployment for K-12 Staff

The Province has provided an initial allotment of 200,000 self-administered COVID-19 rapid antigen tests for use in the K-12 sector for teaching and non-teaching staff. The North Vancouver School District anticipates soon receiving a supply that provides for two tests/employee this month.

These tests will support at-home testing of symptomatic employees who are experiencing [mild COVID-19 symptoms](#) and are an additional tool to support the continuity of teaching and learning. [Testing continues to be available](#) for individuals when recommended by Public Health and for use by local Medical Health Officers when determined necessary as part of cluster and outbreak investigation.

The Province anticipates more tests will arrive later this month that will support the expanded use of rapid tests in the K-12 education sector.

Public Health Order: School Staff Member Vaccination Status Reporting

On January 17, 2022, the Provincial Health Officer issued an [order](#) providing for the collection of vaccination status from school district employees **when directed by a local Medical Health Officer**. While the order is province-wide, the order is **not** effective until directed by a local Medical Health Officer and may not necessarily be implemented in all school districts.

The purpose of the order is to support local Medical Health Officers, *when necessary*, to obtain information about K-12 staff vaccination rates to assess, advise on and respond to risks arising from exposures, cases, clusters and outbreaks in schools. The data may be used to:

- Better understand the risk of infection in schools and in a school district.
- Make decisions about whether a mandatory proof of vaccination procedure or other risk mitigation programs are needed.
- Support and implement any risk mitigation programs that may be adopted.
- Plan for operational continuity and support risk mitigation and contact tracing efforts in the event that a COVID-19 exposure occurs within a school or the workplace.

It is important to understand that the order gives local Medical Health Officers the ability to implement the order for individual school districts. School districts would then need to collect the vaccination status of staff and share that data with the Medical Health Officer in aggregate form.

Q&A with Vancouver Coastal Health

Next week, West Vancouver School District Superintendent Chris Kennedy and I will host Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health for a recorded Q&A session that will focus on COVID-19 and the K-12 school system. Thank you to all who have completed this [form](#) and shared your questions (questions are due by 4 p.m. today). A selection of your questions will be asked to Dr. Lysyshyn, and we look forward to sharing a copy of the recording soon.



In closing, and on behalf of the North Vancouver School District, thank you to each and every one of you, for working together to ensure our schools stay open and that we can safely ensure the continuity of teaching and learning for our students and our staff.

With appreciation,

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

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools

