

February 4, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Earlier today, Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education; Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer; and Stephanie Higginson, president, BC School Trustees Association, provided an update on enhanced health and safety guidelines for K-12 schools. I would like to share some of those changes with you, including what this means for the North Vancouver School District community. A copy of the news announcement can be found [HERE](#).

These updates both acknowledge the tremendous efforts of the school and district staff who continue to work together to ensure our schools remain safe and healthy learning environments, and strengthen our existing measures. You will recall that our [Back-to-School Plan](#) was designed to prioritize the health and safety of our school communities, in order to maximize in-class instructional time, while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools. Today's update builds upon the strong foundation of our Back-to-School Restart Plan and incorporates learnings about COVID-19 from B.C. and other jurisdictions worldwide to make our schools even safer.

As more has been learned about COVID-19, the provincial steering committee, which includes membership from education partners, has used this knowledge to enhance the provincial health and safety guidelines for K-12. Please note that the District is still reviewing the full document, and what is listed below is not a comprehensive list. However, I would like to highlight some of the changes to the existing guidelines:

MASKS

- All **secondary students and K-12 staff** will now be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas, including when they are with their learning groups.

The only exceptions are when:

- sitting or standing at their seat or workstation in a classroom;
- there is a barrier in place; or
- they are eating or drinking.
- Exceptions will continue for students and staff who cannot wear a mask for behavioural or health reasons.
- For **elementary school students**, wearing masks remains a personal or family choice.
- Even with mask-wearing, physical distancing must be practiced, whenever possible.



Note: Masks do not prevent the spread of COVID-19 on their own. Layers of protection, including diligent handwashing and not coming to school when sick, will help ensure students and staff are safe.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

- High-intensity physical activities are to be held outside as much as possible.
- Activities that include prolonged physical contact (e.g. wrestling, partner dancing) should be avoided.
- Shared equipment or items (e.g. weight machines, treadmills), can be used only if they are cleaned between use.

MUSIC CLASSES

- Shared equipment or items (e.g. musical instruments) can be used only if they are cleaned between use.
- Students using equipment or playing instruments should be spaced at least two metres apart.
- Masks are to be worn when singing.

What does this mean for the North Vancouver School District?

Schools will be provided with updated COVID-19 health and safety checklists, which reflect the updated guidelines. School districts will be required to confirm every school has completed the checklist and safety plans have been updated to reflect the updated guidelines by February 26, 2021. All schools will need to post their updated plans publicly.

Note: The changes to mask requirements will be effective immediately. For our grade 8-12 students, please ensure your child is aware of the changes and the new expectations. For our elementary students, mask wearing remains a personal/family choice.

As we work through the updated provincial guidelines, we will be updating the resources and information currently available on our website. In the interim, I would direct you to the following for more information:

- **School COVID-19 Information.** The BC Centre for Disease Control has a new website, which includes a *K-12 Health Checker app* (for students to use as their Daily Health Check), *COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool* (for adults), and *FAQs* regarding health and safety measures in K-12 schools, student and staff safety, and what happens when there is a COVID-19 case in school: www.bccdc.ca/schools.
- **COVID-19 Safe Schools.** Up-to-date information about K-12 schools is available at <https://www.gov.bc.ca/safeschools>



Thank you for your continued efforts and vigilance when it comes to behaviours and practices that will keep our schools open so that our students and staff continue to learn together in safe and healthy learning environments.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent, North Vancouver School District

