

March 31, 2021

Dear Students, Parents/Guardians and Staff,

Earlier this week Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry amended the existing [provincial public health orders](#). The strengthened orders and guidelines are in effect through April 19, 2021 at 11:59 p.m., and details are included in this [news release](#).

Since that announcement, the Ministry of Education and BC Centre for Disease Control have been working on updating their respective K-12 health and safety guidelines (see the *Resources* section at the end of this letter), specifically focusing on mask wearing:

Effective immediately, all K-12 staff and all students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas, including when they are at their work stations/desks, both within and outside of their learning group.

In a grade 3/4 combined class, the mask requirement applies to all students (including those in grade 3).

The mask requirement does not apply to staff or students in the following circumstances:

- to a person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons;
- to a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- if the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- if the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. actively playing a wind instrument, engaging in high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- if a person is eating or drinking;
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements are important.

Students in kindergarten to grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear a mask indoors in schools – both within and outside of their learning group – though mask wearing remains a personal or family choice for these students.



Students will be able to remove their masks while outside, including at recess, lunchtime and while learning outside. As the weather improves, we anticipate teachers will continue to look for opportunities to move their classes outside.

While the amended [provincial public health orders](#) are in effect until April 19, 2021 at 11:59 p.m., there is no expiry date associated with the Ministry of Education updated mask guidance. However, the Ministry of Education will continue to work with Public Health to determine if further changes are required for health and safety reasons.

Starting tomorrow, we ask that you send your child to school in a clean mask and with a spare mask. Schools will have disposable masks available if students forget their mask.

We acknowledge that students in grades 4-7 may not be used to wearing masks in class. Therefore, teachers will spend the next few days helping students to adjust to this change.

Lastly, please keep in mind that masks remain one layer of protection. To keep each other safe, we must continue to:

- Use the Daily Health Check before arriving at school (students and families, click [HERE](#) for the link).
- Stay home when feeling ill.
- Practice diligent and frequent handwashing.
- Practice physical distancing when possible, even outdoors.
- Spend time close to home with members of our own household.
- Adhere to [province-wide restrictions](#).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation, understanding and patience as we work to operationalize these very recent changes. The actions we collectively take will help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, keep our schools open and keep our students and staff safe.

With appreciation,

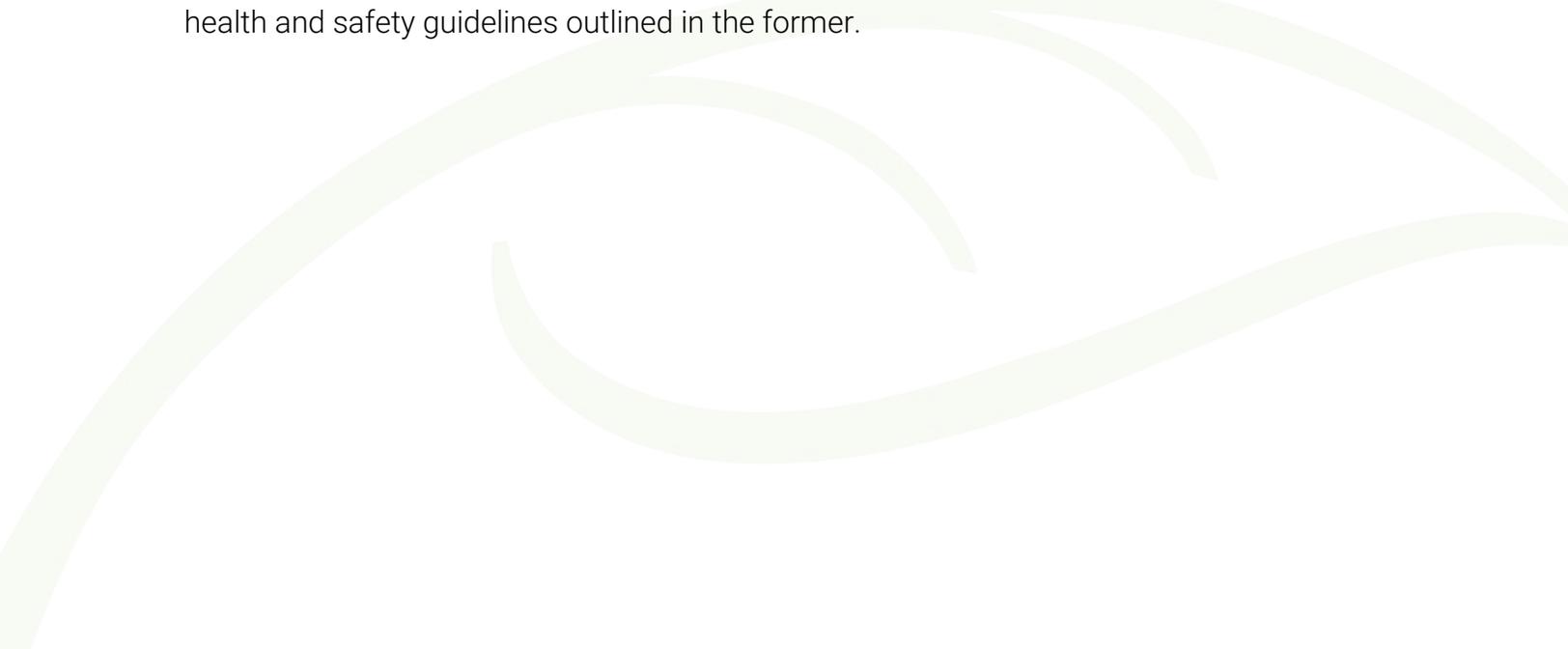
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent, North Vancouver School District

Resources

- [Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)* This document was developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Indigenous rights holders and education partners.
- [Addendum – BCCDC Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)*
- [\[VIDEO\] How to wear a non-medical face mask or face covering properly](#)
- [\[POSTER\] How to wear a face mask](#)

*In the case of any variance between the *Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings* and the *BCCDC Addendum*, schools and school districts will follow the health and safety guidelines outlined in the former.

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