

January 7, 2022

Dear North Vancouver School District Community,

On behalf of the North Vancouver School District and Board of Education, I would like to offer a warm welcome back after the extended Winter Break. I would also like to thank you for your support and patience this week, as district and school staff worked together to review and implement enhanced safety measures and plan and prepare for the continuation of teaching and learning for the remainder of the school year.

I acknowledge this is not the return to school we had hoped for. However, as we have done since the start of the pandemic, we will continue to meet the challenges presented, together, for the continued safe operations of our schools and for the health, safety and well-being of the community.

Today's update regarding the return to school for students on Monday, January 10 is meant to provide you with greater clarity and answer some of the questions we have been receiving from our community.

School Closures

There are three types of school closures, as defined by the Ministry of Education:

- *Health closure* of a school, which is determined by the local health authority due to the COVID-19 case count in, or related to, a school.
- *Functional closure* of a school, which is determined by the school or school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial services to ensure the health and safety of students.
- *Transportation closure*, which is due to a lack of staff to be able to provide the required level of transportation services for students.

You may have heard reference to *functional closures* in the media. It is important to know the North Vancouver School District is in a strong position to adapt to any future circumstance that may arise to ensure continuity of teaching and learning for students and staff. This means we would look to use functional closures as a last resort; instead, school and school district leadership would work together to address emerging issues to minimize disruption to in-class learning and transition to online learning, if necessary. It is



also important to know that a functional closure would not necessarily impact the entire school (i.e. it may only impact a single class). You can expect school administration to be in close contact with students, families and staff and to support those who are impacted by any type of school closure.

Continuity of Learning

The North Vancouver School District will support the continuity of learning through platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, the school district's Information and Communication Technology team continues to support students, families and staff with technology needs, by way of resources, including training documentation on the use of Microsoft Teams and videoconferencing. If you are a student, parent or guardian, please click [HERE](#) for the Technology Support web page. If you are an educator or staff member, updated resources and reference material are available on the staff portal [HERE](#).

Contact Tracing and Notifications of School Exposures

The Provincial Health Officer has communicated that in response to the different characteristics of the Omicron variant, contact tracing and the school exposure notification process that had been in place would no longer continue. School districts have been advised that the Ministry of Education is working with the Ministry of Health, local medical health officers and BCCDC to determine the process needed to communicate exposure risk going forward. We will share updated information with our community, including the use of rapid antigen testing in the K-12 setting, once we have received and reviewed it.

Reinforcement of Existing and Additional Preventive Measures

As a reminder, when we welcome back all students on Monday, January 10, health and safety measures already in place will be reinforced, including encouraging everyone:

- To [get fully vaccinated](#), if eligible to do so.
- To [do a daily health check](#) and stay home when feeling sick. Families: please continue to report absences to your child's school to ensure accurate attendance reporting.
- To [wear a mask in all indoor areas](#). Note:
 - We encourage everyone to come to school with a well-fitted mask and to keep a spare on hand; however, the school district does have a supply of disposable masks available should a student or staff member require it.

- If unable to wear a mask due to an exception, (as listed [HERE](#), starting on page 20), please consider one of the alternatives shared [HERE](#) by the BCCDC.)
- To practice good personal hygiene, including frequent handwashing.
- To respect the personal space of others and maximize the use of available learning spaces, including taking students and learning outside, where and when possible.

In addition, schools will have implemented additional prevention measures including:

- Maximizing space between people and implementing strategies to prevent crowding during class transition and break times (e.g. staggered start/stop times, recess/lunch).
- Holding staff-only gatherings, meetings and pro-d activities, virtually.
- Holding school gatherings and events, including assemblies, virtually. If gatherings and events must be held in person, the number of people in attendance cannot exceed 50% operating capacity and spectators cannot be present.
- Limiting visitors and volunteers to those who are essential to supporting activities that are of direct benefit to student learning and well-being.
- Pausing extra-curricular sports tournaments. At this time, athletics, including practices and one team to one team competitions can continue. However, and as noted in the 3rd bullet point, spectators cannot be present.

Decisions regarding whether or not to continue activities such as field trips will be made by school administration, in consultation with school district leadership, and will be based on satisfying a number of conditions, including how essential the activity is to student learning and only if enhanced guidelines can be followed.

School Ventilation

The school district actively and regularly invests in our school and site buildings to support the health and safety of students and staff and comfortable teaching and learning environments.

As noted on our [Ventilation](#) web page, which includes links to each school's completed ventilation system overview reporting, in the 2020/2021 school year, the North Vancouver School District undertook over \$3.6M in ventilation upgrade projects across the school district. This work ensures the school district is providing mechanical ventilation to all classrooms, including portables and modular structures.

The following additional measures have also been taken:

- All air handling systems in each school, which have the potential to recirculate air from occupied spaces, have MERV 13 filters installed. The only exception to this is a few energy recovery ventilators, and/or make up air units in some schools, which directly introduce outdoor (fresh) air and are equipped with MERV 10 filters.
- All ventilation systems have had their operations extended by 2 hours in advance of scheduled occupancy and 2 hours post-scheduled occupancy to pre and post ventilate spaces.
- Ventilation systems have been programmed to maximize the introduction of outdoor air.
- Dedicated exhaust ventilation has been added to all first aid rooms.

I would encourage you to review the information provided on this [Ventilation](#) web page, which includes links to previously issued communications and presentations on school ventilation.

Resource Links

The school district's [COVID-19 Information and Resources](#) web page has been updated to include links to the following resources (shared with you last week). Please bookmark the page as updates will be made as new information is received.

- [December 2021 Addendum – Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings \(PDF\)](#). This document is an addendum to the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#), which was developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BCCDC, Indigenous rights holders and education partners including teachers, parents/guardians and school leaders to outline the principles and requirements for maintaining safe learning environments. These guidelines build on the below-noted *BCCDC Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools*.
- [December 2021 Addendum – BCCDC Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#). This document is an addendum to the [BCCDC Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#), which was developed by the BCCDC and Ministry of Health.
- [Ministry of Education COVID-19 Safe Schools website](#)

Ongoing Communications

Key to working together for the safe return to school and continuity of teaching and learning is keeping our community well informed with timely communications. You can therefore expect to receive:

- *School-level communication.* Your school principal and/or child's teacher will continue to share school-specific operational and educational information and resources.
- *District-level communication.* You will continue to receive communications from me, including information regarding emergent issues and regularly scheduled Superintendent's Reports.

The health, safety and well-being of students and staff are a top priority for the North Vancouver School District. As we continue to monitor, learn and adapt, in order to manage COVID-19, maintain educational continuity and a much needed sense of normalcy for students, staff and the wider community, I would like to express our collective deep gratitude to all of you for your ongoing trust, support and patience. I also ask that we continue to treat each other with kindness, compassion and grace.

If you have any questions about this update, please contact your child's school directly.

With appreciation,

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

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools