

Hello all. Ey Swayel.

It's January 4th, opening day, and I want to start this message with a welcome back and wishing everyone a Happy New Year. As usual we wanted to start this week with some information as we look ahead to 2021. First and foremost, I hope that in whatever form you could, that you managed to enjoy the winter break. The two weeks off was a great chance for us all to take a breath and to relax from our normal day to day routines. I wanted to specifically speak to a couple of things where we believe we are with COVID and a reminder of the important steps for us all.

I want to start with thanking our team who worked over the holidays to continued to provide notices to schools. From December 19 until December 27 our team responded to 140 incidents and with all of our notifications to parents and the community, they sent over 200,000 emails. We are indebted to their work during winter break. But these 140 incidents are a reminder to us all that COVID is still very much part of our daily lives. We've now had three instances where we had to work with the health authorities to debrief situations where we cannot rule out transmission happening in a school. In each situation we're reminded of a couple of key factors. The hierarchy of controls really matter from physical distancing, to managing the flow in schools and hallways, to keeping students physically distanced to the greatest extent possible, to the personal hygiene and health checks that you do, and finally with personal protective equipment such as masks. Each of these measures need to be taken seriously and these are our tools against transmission.

- Physical distancing: to the greatest extent possible please continue to try to remain apart in your school.
- When we organize classes and instruction: we know it's tight and especially in our crowded secondary schools but please continue to have students apart as much as possible.
- Flow in the hallways and outside of your classroom and your learning group: please remain physically distanced to the greatest extent possible and keep your contacts to a minimum.
- Personal hygiene: wash your hands often and don't touch your face.
- And for secondary schools a reminder that it is a requirement that anytime staff or students are outside your learning group or your classroom that you wear your mask.
- Perhaps most importantly do your daily health check: do not come to school when you have symptoms.

The run from January until March is often a very long haul. It's dark, it's rainy, and it's often a time of the cold and flu season. This is a time when we all need to continue to be reminded that education during the pandemic is about taking care of ourselves, our families, particularly the elderly and of each other. Sticking with our protocols as part of this care.

I want to end this message with a shout out to staff and a reminder of just how everyone in buildings is going above and beyond during the pandemic. Whether you're support staff, teachers or administration, our school staff are working each and every day to make the health



protocols work and to provide education in the wake of COVID. We have had staff members ill, we've had students' ill and we've had families impacted. We care deeply about public education and its value to society and we need to remain thankful to those who are doing the daily work in classrooms in school. It's them that we serve. And we will continue to do all we can to support our staff and our community.

Take care, stay well. Hy'ce:pka.