

Hi Swayel everyone.

Hello and welcome back

It was one year ago when we began our adventure of moving all instruction to remote learning. I don't know if any of us could have imagined at the time what the year would look like and now, while we still are in the midst of the pandemic there is hope on the horizon. That hope comes in the form of vaccination, but that hope is still clouded by the high daily case counts. Today's message is intended to update you on the additional measures we are taking, on vaccinations, and on the new Order about Face Coverings.

First to the additional measures. Just prior to the break, we announced several targeted measures. These measures begin with the reminder that the hierarchy of controls work. That these controls are in order of effectiveness.

- There is no replacement for physical distancing. To the greatest extent possible, maintain physical distancing at all times.
- Teachers – please continue to organize your learning structures to maximize physical distancing to the greatest extent possible.
- Adults – please do not meet face to face at any time in a closed office without masks and physical distancing. All meetings, wherever possible should be held virtually.
- We are eliminating all visitations to schools by district staff unless organized previously by the school principal.
- We are moving maintenance activities to outside instructional time or to schools only determined to have low prevalence of cases.
- We want to eliminate teachers and others moving across classes even within a cohort. This means stopping teachers with specific subject expertise sharing classes in upper intermediate is a practice.
- We want all teachers to specifically teach Health and Safety protocols to their students to reaffirm the importance of the hierarchy of controls and what they mean for children.
- We are asking for no visitors to schools unless it is essential for operation or the education of your child.
- We want all students and parents to leave the school grounds when school is over.
- We will be reinforcing the zones of play and re-examining the options for staggered lunch and break times as a way to minimize contact.
- We remind all staff about the importance of not gathering informally during break times without maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask at all times.
- We are examining the potential to have elementary schools delay start times so that teachers can have common prep time as this will eliminate teachers having to move across cohorts.
- We are looking to move StrongStart programs online as a means to reduce adult contact in buildings.

- We will be having 3 early dismissals to provide staff time to review and adjust their health and safety plans and to consider any recommendations or adjustments; and
- Beginning today, we will implement the new Order of the Chief Medical Officer that requires masks at all times for all staff in K-12 when you are inside a school.
- The Order also requires all students in grades 4-12 to wear a mask at all times when inside a school
- Finally, the Order strongly recommends and encourages the wearing of masks for all Kindergarten to grade 3 students.

There are, of course, exceptions to the Mask Order. These exceptions are:

- If people are unable to wear a mask because of a specific health or medical condition;
- If people cannot put on or remove a covering without the help of another;
- If a teacher or instructor is providing direct instruction while more than 2m from others;
- While consuming food or beverages; or
- When communicating with someone who has a hearing impairment.

That's a long list of measures and again, this is a whole package.

In addition to the above package, we are very excited to get vaccinations for all our school-based staff. We also know that there are many others like our grounds and maintenance or IT or other district-based staff who are in schools and who need vaccinations as well. We continue to work directly with Fraser Health at trying to get everyone vaccinated and Dr. Bonnie Henry has said that all of the K-12 sector is a priority. We are hopeful that very soon, all of Surrey, and all districts in BC will be vaccinated.

One year ago, we didn't have children in school. I believe that having children in school, where they belong, is our top priority. It is the balance of fighting the pandemic and providing our society with all the services that schools provide from education to social connections, to nutrition and mental health supports.

If we keep doing all the measures, if we get vaccinated quickly, and if we all stay vigilant. I have no doubt we'll see this through.

As spring break ends, June is on the horizon. Warmer weather means more access to outside activities. It's a time of renewal and optimism with all that we are doing. That optimism comes with a doubling down on what we know works. Every day brings more people vaccinated and more optimism that this will end.

Let's hope that by June, we can look toward a summer that feels a bit more normal and a September when we can begin to put COVID in our rear-view mirror.

Hy'ce:pka