

Hello all

Ey Swayel

Tomorrow, it is December 1st and I wanted to take a moment to look back and to look ahead. It's been a tough week with larger case numbers than we've ever seen. Clearly the second wave is in full swing and we have, unfortunately now seen 2 school closures. We are very happy to re-open Cambridge elementary today and at the same time, we are saddened to have to begin a two week closure at Newton Elementary. To the staff and communities of both of those schools, thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to fight the virus. To spend 2 weeks in isolation is so unfortunate and we're sorry that this has happened. This is time for us to double down, to renew our efforts and it is also time to look ahead for the hope on the horizon.

We've had two environmental assessments now with a team from Fraser Health and a team from the school and district joining to evaluate how we are doing with the protocols. What have we learned? We are reminded just how detailed the health protocols are and that it takes vigilance across the board to make this work. In each of the assessments there are common themes and while we are reminded that these protocols require us all to change our behaviour. Things that are highlighted in these assessments remind us to:

- Remain vigilant during their free time, breaks and lunch
- Avoid congregating in staff rooms and lunch rooms
- Making sure to stay distant to the best extent possible when moving in hallways or when in line for something
- Do your daily health checks
- Don't go to work or school when you have symptoms
- Adults and secondary students, wear masks as required in the guidelines in hallways, common areas and any time you cannot physically distance and you are outside your cohort or learning group
- Organize student seating plans so that they are distanced to the greatest extent possible

I believe that there is no one thing that is going to stop or eliminate the spread of the virus in schools. It is a package, the tiers of protection, cleaning, and personal behaviours that we all need to do to keep our schools safe.

We said from the start that this is about living and learning with COVID. It's in our community, and it's going to come to school. As of Friday, we have sent 323 letters to schools since the start of the school year. That is a lot but a reminder that we have 138 educational sites across the district. In all, 81 of these sites have received 1 or fewer notices with 45 schools never having received a single notice. This is in 3 full months of schooling again across 138 sites. There is no doubt we've faced challenging times with multiple notices in many schools and two

schools in closure for 2 weeks. Dr. Bonnie Henry said all along that the risk must be commensurate with the reward. Over 70,000 children in school every day is a pretty big reward.

There is also more hope on the horizon. We are hearing news of a vaccine and while that likely is still far away, there clearly is substantial progress. We've been in school for 12 weeks. In 3 more, we'll be in winter break when we'll all have a chance to decompress with the 2 weeks off. When we return, it will be January, and hopefully we'll have new information about exactly where we stand. There is no doubt it will be a challenging spring, but likely more hope will emerge as we look toward June and summer.

In the spring I said slowly and steadily we'll get there. I feel nothing has really changed. Slowly and steadily we will get there. We need to remain vigilant, calm compassionate and we need to continue to care for our children as we always do each and every day.

Take care, stay well,

Hycepka