



March 13, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Re: COVID-19

As we are heading into spring break, please be assured that the health and safety of students and staff is our first priority.

Please see the attached letter from D. Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education dated March 13, 2020. This letter has important information about international travel and large group gatherings.

District staff works closely with the Interior Health Authority, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education. All public health authorities continue to indicate that the risk to school communities remains low. Nonetheless, the District and public health officials remain vigilant as information regarding COVID-19 is evolving rapidly.

#### Timely and Factual Information

Health Officials indicate that anyone who is concerned that they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness or COVID-19, should contact their primary care provider, local public health office or call 8-1-1.

Parents with questions or concerns regarding their children's attendance at school are asked to please contact your school principal directly. Students, parents and staff are encouraged to check the District website for information and updates. If the District receives updates about impacts to schools over spring break, that information will be communicated through School Connect and posted on our District website.

#### Prevention

Since the emergence of COVID-19, enhanced preventative measures have been implemented in our District's schools and facilities. These reflect and align with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and BC Communicable Disease Control's published recommendations in the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) B.C. Public Health Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs.

Some tips to reduce your risk of contracting the flu, colds or the novel coronavirus:

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- If a sink is not available, alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, using a wipe and then ABHR is effective.
- Do not touch your face/eyes/mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Regular household cleaning products are effective against most viruses.
- Stay home if you are sick and away from others so you don't pass it on.

The above are common practices during cold and flu season and their importance is emphasized considering COVID-19.

**International Field Studies/Spring Break Travel**

Similar to other School Districts, our District has decided to cancel all international field study trips. These decisions were made out of an abundance of caution and with the utmost consideration for the health and welfare of student travelers and staff. In making these decisions, District staff considers multiple sources of information including but not limited to Government of Canada travel advisories, the Office of the Public Health Officer, Interior Health and the World Health Organization.

Again, I want to assure you that the health and safety of students and staff is the District's top priority. We continue to work very closely with Interior Health in order to ensure that the appropriate actions and preventative measures are in place.

These are extraordinary times with much uncertainty for families and communities. However, I do hope that all of our families and staff have a safe and relaxing spring break and are able to enjoy time with family and friends.

The School District will continue to publish all COVID-19 updates to the district website at: **[www.sd23.bc.ca](http://www.sd23.bc.ca)**.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kaardal  
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

Attachment – March 13, 2020 letter from Deputy Minister D. Scott MacDonald, Ministry of Education



March 13, 2020

Ref: 218344

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

As spring break begins, we want to ensure you have the latest information on BC's response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Yesterday, Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Medical Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry announced new actions and preventive measures.

Please be aware the Provincial Health Officer is advising against all non-essential travel outside of Canada, including the United States. If you do travel outside of Canada, you are asked to self-isolate (stay away from school or work) for 14 days upon your return to B.C. The self-isolation protocol is voluntary but public health officials hope all British Columbians will comply as part of their civic duty.

The Provincial Health Officer is also directing all community gatherings and events planned for 250 or more people be cancelled or postponed. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious gatherings or other similar events such as school musical theatre or concerts.

An important reminder, please ensure you and your children are washing hands frequently and if anyone in your family is sick, please stay home. If you or a family member may have been exposed to COVID-19, you should call your local primary care provider, or 811, to arrange for safe testing.

The health and safety of students, staff and our school community is our priority. At this time, the Provincial Health Officer advises school closures are not necessary. Dr. Henry adds schools help children stay safe by reinforcing frequent hand washing and other preventive measures. The Health Minister confirms there will be ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Education and education stakeholders over spring break to continue monitoring COVID-19 and BC's response to it.

We have implemented the guidance from the PHO regarding increased frequency of cleaning and increasing opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands as important ways of reducing the risk of transmitting this infection.

We are in a very challenging time and some of these asks may be difficult for you and your family. By taking these preventive steps together, public health officials aim to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to protect vulnerable people in our communities. It can be reasonably expected that other measures may be introduced. We will continue to monitor the situation daily and will do our best to keep you and your family updated on developments.

There are daily news conferences held by the PHO and the Minister of Health. Their news releases can be found at: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health>

The BC Centre for Disease Control is also frequently updating its COVID-19 information. For more information: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-(covid-19))

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Scott MacDonald', written in a cursive style.

D. Scott MacDonald  
Deputy Minister