

September 23, 2020

RE: Updated COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Back to School, and school health priorities

I would like to take this opportunity to share with School District #52 staff, parents and students an update on the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Public Health Guidance for K-12 schools.

We know that school communities have many questions about the safe resumption of in-class learning in BC, and want to make sure you have the resources you need to find information and advice.

The BCCDC's [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) was updated on Friday September 11, 2020. Key changes in the most recent version include:

A simplified symptom list in the Daily Health Check form

The new symptom list focuses on key symptoms which are more specific to COVID-19: fever, chills, cough, difficulty breathing, loss of sense of smell or taste, diarrhea, or nausea and vomiting.

It is generally unnecessary to stay home from school or seek testing if you only have other, milder symptoms (such as runny nose, fatigue, or headache), and none of the key symptoms, because in most cases COVID-19 will be quite unlikely.

New criteria for returning to school after symptoms develop

Staff and students may return to school without health assessment or testing, if they have no fever, and only one of the key symptoms above, and it improves within 24 hours. Otherwise, health assessment is recommended if key symptoms occur, and you should not return to school until COVID-19 is ruled out by assessment, testing, or at least 10 days have passed from when symptoms began.

These changes will allow those who are very unlikely to have COVID-19 to remain in school, and will reduce unnecessary burdens on families and the health care system.

Changes to requirements for schools to report when absenteeism exceeds 10% (no longer required)

Staff and student absences may be for any number of reasons, and public health surveillance for communicable disease activity, including COVID-19, is based on testing, case confirmations and contact follow up.

Answers to many questions from schools and families can be found in this Frequently Asked Questions resource - [BCCDC FAQs BC's Back to School Plan](#).

Northern Health has also added a [School Exposure section](#) to its Public Exposures and Outbreaks web page, where you can find notification information of possible exposures to COVID-19 within schools in the NH region. A notification does not mean staff or students have been exposed to COVID-19; if a school has been notified of an exposure, no action is required unless you are contacted by Public Health or are otherwise directed by school officials.

There are many things you can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in school settings and in your own community. Please visit the BCCDC website for more information: www.bccdc.ca.

In health,

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