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**August 24, 2021**

**School District 52  
Prince Rupert**

**Back to School  
Communicable Disease  
Plan  
2021-2022**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	Page
Introduction	3
Resources	3
Key Principles	3
Regional Differences	3
Infection Prevention	4
Physical Distancing and Space	4
Staff Only Spaces	5
School Gatherings and Events	5
Personal Items	6
Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities	6
Student Transportation	7
Cleaning and Disinfecting	7
Visitor Access/Community Use	8
Illness and Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols	9
Staying Home, Self-Isolation and Symptoms	10
Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Etiquette, PPE	11
Visitors	12
Exceptions for Staff, Students and Visitors	12
Improvements to School Ventilation Systems	13
Emergency and Evacuation Drills	13
Communication and Training/Orientation	13
International Students	14
Curriculum, Programs and Activities	14
Dual Credit/Trades Training Programs	14
Field Trips	14
Food/Culinary Programs	14
Food Services	14
Fundraisers	15
Kindergarten Program Entry	15
Music Programs	15
Physical Health Education (PHE)/Outdoor Programs	15
Playgrounds	16
School Libraries/Learning Commons	16
School Sports	16
Theatre, Film and Dance Programs	17
Work Experience	17
Communication and Engagement Plan	17
Mental Health Supports	17
Appendix A: COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing and Return to School	18

This plan has been developed in alignment with the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K – 12 Setting (Updated August 24, 2021) in British Columbia. The goal of this document is to support K – 12 education employees, students, parents, caregivers, administrators and school community members to:

- Be informed about communicable disease measures and how they support a safe school environment.
- Understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and promoting safe and healthy schools.

## RESOURCES

The following Provincial guidance documents and websites have been used in preparing this Back to School Communicable Disease Plan:

- [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)
- <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/covid-19/bcs-four-step-restart>
- [K-12 Education Recovery Plan](#)
- [BCCDC COVID-19 Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)
- WorkSafeBC; <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/covid-19/bcs-four-step-restart>

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- All school districts are to adhere to the standards, guidelines, and protocols of the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC.
- Using the guidelines, school districts are required to have communicable disease plans, adjust the plans to reflect any updates in the guidelines and post these updated plans to the district/school websites.
- Psychological safety measures and trauma-informed practice will be valued and implemented alongside physical health and safety measures.
- Effective and ongoing communication with school leaders, community partners, Indigenous rights holders, parents, caregivers, students, unions and employees is an essential aspect of successfully implementing the plans.

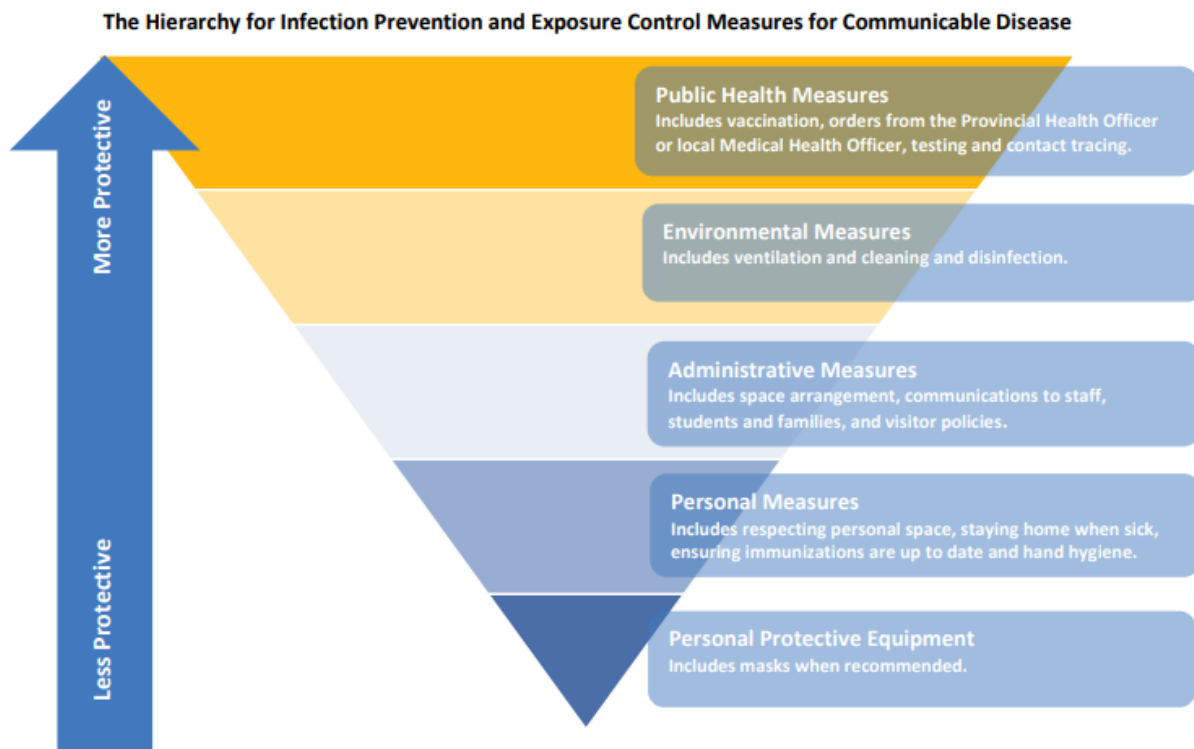
## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Moving forward, Medical Health Officers will have the authority to put regional measures in place during times of increased community transmission of COVID-19 and within communities with low vaccination uptake. Local Public Health Orders may be placed for entire regions, communities, including but not limited to schools, or for specific settings or activities within a health authority or region.

## INFECTION PREVENTION and EXPOSURE CONTROL MEASURES

The Exposure Control Measures are adhered to in the school district to reduce the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19. Our schools support these preventative measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviours
- Sharing reliable information from the BCCDC with parents, families and caregivers
- Promoting safety measures in the school through the use of visual aids and signage
- Striving to utilize positive and inclusive approaches that are not punitive or stigmatizing
- Using a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities and events



## PHYSICAL DISTANCING and SPACE ARRANGEMENT

Although public health no longer recommends learning groups and physical distancing of 2M as communicable disease measures for the K – 12 setting, there are a number of strategies schools will consider to help create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach:

- Remind students and staff about respecting others personal space.
- Use available space to spread people out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, where possible.
- Implement strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop off times.
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Take students outside more often, where and when possible.
- Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
- Use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school.

## STAFF ONLY SPACES

Experience to date underscores the importance of COVID-19 prevention among adults, as well as students, in the school setting. We are using the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) to guide staff-only spaces within schools. [WorkSafeBC Guidance for Workplaces](#) will be used to determine what measures should be in place for non-school spaces such as Board Offices and Maintenance Buildings.

The following strategies will be implemented:

- Floor markings and signage to direct traffic flow and prevent crowding (e.g. in staff rooms, by the photocopier, etc.)
- For meetings and professional development gatherings, room occupancy limits, spreading staff out and virtual options will be applied.

## SCHOOL GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

School gatherings and events can occur as permitted by public health recommendations and orders. Organizers will apply trauma-informed lens to their planning, including the consideration of:

- Respecting student and staff comfort levels regarding personal space.
- Using available space to spread people out as much as possible, respecting room occupancy limits and avoiding overcrowding.
- Gradual transitions to larger gatherings (e.g. school-wide assemblies), including starting with virtual or smaller in-person options, shorter in-person sessions, etc.

## **PERSONAL ITEMS**

Staff and students can continue to bring personal items to school but will be encouraged not to share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, unwashed utensils, wind instruments).

Students can continue to use their lockers. Schools will implement site specific-strategies to manage the flow of students around lockers to minimize crowding.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/DIVERSE ABILITIES**

The school district will continue to implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), most children with immune compromise can follow the same precautions for COVID-19 as the general population and can safely attend in-class instruction.

For students with severe immune compromise or medical complexity, consultation with a medical health care provider is recommended to determine if in-class instruction is safe.

Parents and caregivers with severe immune compromise are encouraged to contact their school district administrator to discuss available options for their child (including appropriate preventative measures are in place for in-class instruction, online learning or home-schooling).

Staff who are supporting students with disabilities/diverse abilities may need to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with the student.

Staff working indoors with a student, where the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield. Additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used as part of the personal care routine normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g. gloves for toileting).

Staff will wear a mask with a transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth when working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important.

## STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

### BUSES

Students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear non-medical masks, or face-coverings on school buses. Grades K – 3 students are encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face-coverings on school buses but are not required to do so – mask wearing remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for these students, and their choices must be respected.

Students will be spread out on the bus if empty seats are available.

### CARPOOLING

It is recommended that staff and families who are carpooling follow this guidance:

- Spread out vehicle occupants as much as possible.
- Travel with the same people whenever possible.
- Set the vehicle's air to bring in fresh outside air.
- Open windows when weather allows.
- Clean hands before and after trips.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.

For school activities, follow mask requirements.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. Our schools are cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the [BCCDC's Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings Guidelines](#).

Classrooms and offices are provided with wipes and food grade disinfecting spray to use throughout the day as required in classrooms. The District has implemented cleaning protocols for all common areas and surfaces, including washrooms, equipment, tools, common tables, desks, light switches, hand railings and door handles. Those engaged in cleaning have adequate training and materials. The school district has invested in Electrostatic Disinfectors which are extremely effective in sanitizing high touch surfaces.

Frequently touched surfaces in public spaces and washrooms will be cleaned at least once in a 24-hour period by custodial staff.

### Frequently Touched Surfaces:

Frequently touched surfaces include:

- Items used by multiple students and staff including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet and toilet handles, tables, desks, chairs, manipulatives and toys.
- Shared equipment such as computer keyboards, and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for Science labs, kitchen equipment for Culinary programs, sewing machines, PE/Sports equipment.
- Appliances staff and students can share such as microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers, or laminators.
- Service Counters in offices and libraries.

Frequently-touched items that are not easily cleaned (e.g. fabric, playdough, sand, foam) can be used as long as hand hygiene is practiced before and after use.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or paper-based products. Laminated or glossy-paper products and items with plastic covers can be contaminated if handled by someone with COVID-19; however, the risk is low. There is no need for these items to be cleaned and disinfected or quarantined for any period of time, of for hand hygiene to be practiced before or after use.

## **VISITOR ACCESS/COMMUNITY USE**

- Schools can leave front doors unlocked for visitor access, but may wish to encourage visitors to make appointments.
  - Visitor access to schools may be restricted by provincial or local health orders or recommended by a medical health officer.
- Schools must ensure that visitors are aware of communicable disease protocols and requirements and have completed a daily health check prior to entering the school.
- Information regarding communicable disease protocols will be posted by the entrance to the school, on the school website and in communications to students and families.
- Schools must have a sign in/sign out process in place for all visitors and staff who are not typically on site.
- All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside the school.



- Where possible visitor access should be limited to those areas required for the purpose of the visit (e.g. school office for drop-off/pick-up of items, gymnasium for a sports event, etc.) and parents/caregivers should be encouraged to drop-off/pick-up students outside of the school.
- Parents/caregivers and other visitors should respect others' personal space while on school grounds, including outside.

After hours community use of school facilities will not be happening at this time.

## **ILLNESS and SELF-ASSESSMENT POLICIES and PROTOCOLS**

### **DAILY HEALTH CHECK**

A daily health check is a tool to reduce the likelihood of a person with COVID-19 coming to school when they are infectious.

- Parents/caregivers and students can utilize the new provincial **K-12 Health Check app** at <https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca/healthcheck?execution=e1s1> for daily assessment of symptoms.
- Staff and other adults must complete a daily health check prior to entering the school.
- If a student, staff or adult is sick, they must not enter the school.

Schools and school facility administrators will put protocols in place at all school district facilities to ensure;

- Staff, parents, caregivers and visitors know they are responsible to complete the health check before entering school/work sites and stay home if they are sick
- Parents, caregivers have completed the daily health check with their child and keep them home if they are sick.
- Procedures are established for students or staff members who become sick at work to go home as soon as possible.
- Procedures are established for students and staff to return to school/work after being sick.

Schools and the school district will not require a health care provider note to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodations.

## STAYING HOME, SELF-ISOLATION AND SYMPTOMS

### Stay Home when Required to Self-Isolate

Students, staff or other adults must stay home if they are required to self-isolate. Additional information on self-isolation requirements and support is available from the BCCDC.

### Symptoms of Illness and Return to School

Students, staff or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of COVID-19 in schools. The following resources provide guidance regarding specific symptoms of illness:

- Parents/caregivers and students can use the K – 12 Health Check app.
- Staff and other adults can refer to BCCDC's, "[When to get tested for COVID-19.](#)"
- Staff, students and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online Self-Assessment Tool, call 811 or their health care provider.

When a staff, student or other adult can return to school depends on the type of symptoms they experienced, if a COVID-19 test is recommended, and the type of illness they had. See Appendix A – COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School for more information regarding what to do when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g. seasonal allergies) can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. They do not require re-assessment by a health-care provider and should not be required to provide a health-care provider note. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a healthcare provider.

Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household develops new symptoms of illness, provided the student/staff has no symptoms themselves. If the household member tests positive for COVID-19, public health will advise the asymptomatic student/staff on self-isolation and when they may return to school.

## HAND HYGIENE

Rigorous hand-washing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness (antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19).

The following guidelines will be followed in our schools:

- Diligent hand hygiene which means washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (water temperature does not change the effectiveness)
- Facilitation of regular opportunities to practice hand hygiene:
  - portable hand-washing or sanitization stations where sinks are not available
  - hand-sanitization is encouraged upon entry to the school, before/after breaks, using the washroom and using gym/playground equipment.
- Handwashing posters are displayed at handwashing and sanitization sites.
- Staff and students have received training about effective handwashing as well as to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- The School District has added sinks in all of the classrooms that did not have a sink to encourage hand hygiene.

## RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Students and staff should:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve or a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (including masks) can provide an additional layer of protection. Non-medical masks and face coverings have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They provide protection to the wearer and to those around them.

Those wearing masks should still respect others personal space.

## K – 12 Staff

All K – 12 staff are required to wear a mask or face shield (with a mask) indoors in schools and on school buses.

Staff who are supporting students with complex behaviours, medical complexities or receiving delegated care may need to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with students. See p. 4, **Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities**.

## **K – 12 STUDENTS**

All students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear a mask or a face shield (with a non-medical mask) indoors in schools, in classrooms and on buses.

Students in Grades K to 3 are encouraged to wear a mask indoors in schools and on school buses, but are not required to do so – mask wearing remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for these students and their choices must be respected.

The use of masks should not reduce or replace other more effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in schools, such as:

- Ensuring students and staff are aware of their responsibility to perform a daily health check and to stay home when they are sick or if required to self-isolate.
- Daily cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces
- Frequent hand hygiene.

These measures provide multiple layers of protection that reduce the risk of transmission.

Schools and the school district will have non-medical masks available for staff and students, including anyone who becomes sick while at school.

## **VISITORS**

All visitors must wear non-medical masks when they are inside schools and school district facilities.

## **EXCEPTIONS FOR STAFF, STUDENTS AND VISITORS**

The guidance outlined does not apply in the following circumstances:

- a person cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons;
- a person is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;

- the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument, engaging in high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- a person is eating or drinking;
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements is important.

While mask requirements outlined in this document specifically apply to K – 12 schools, public health recommends that staff and visitors at non-school sites (e.g. administrative offices, maintenance facilities, etc.) wear masks in indoor common/shared spaces if they are not fully vaccinated. Staff and visitors at non-school sites must also adhere to any regional or provincial public health recommendations or orders for workplaces requiring increased mask use.

Schools must not require a health care provider note to confirm if staff, students or visitors cannot wear a mask.

No student should be prevented from attending or fully participating at school if they do not wear a mask.

## **IMPROVEMENTS to SCHOOL VENTILATION SYSTEMS**

At this time, there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of the virus. However, improvements have been made to SD 52 facilities to increase fresh air flow and exchange.

## **EMERGENCY and EVACUATION DRILLS**

Schools will continue to practice emergency and evacuation drills, including the six required annual fire drills per year. Schools will modify current drill procedures to adhere to health and safety guidelines.

## **COMMUNICATION and TRAINING/ORIENTATION**

The School District will continue to consistently communicate guidance, recommendations and Orders from regional Medical Health Officers and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), including COVID-19 resources.

In School District 52, Occupational Health and Safety Teams will meet before school starts to review and revise the individual School Communicable Disease Plans for 2021-2022. The District Communicable Disease Plan will be shared with our Trustees, and stakeholders including the PRDTU, IUOE, Indigenous Education Council, DPAC and Principal's Association before schools are back in session.

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

International Students returning to Canada will be required to self-isolate for 14 days before attending school. This information is communicated to the Ministry of Education.

## **CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

All curriculum, programs and activities will operate in alignment with the Provincial K – 12 Health and Safety Guidelines, including school-led activities held off campus (e.g. sports academies, community-based programs/courses). Schools will continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices specific to the activity.

## **DUAL CREDIT/TRADES IN TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Schools will ensure that students taking dual credit courses or training in trades in post-secondary institutions are aware of, and adhere to the communicable disease plans set out by those institutions.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Staff should follow existing school district 52 policies and procedures as well as the guidance in the school and district communicable disease plans.

## **FOOD/CULINARY PROGRAMS**

Schools can continue to include food preparation as part of learning programs for students. Staff and students will be following the guidelines set out by Work Safe, Food Safe and the BCCDC to ensure cleaning and disinfecting measures as well as hand hygiene are followed.

## **FOOD SERVICES**

Schools will continue to provide food services for the breakfast and lunch programs, including for sale. We will continue to emphasize that food and beverages should not be shared. We will

also continue to accept food donations to support learning and the delivery of meal programs and other food access initiatives.

## **FUNDRAISERS**

Schools can continue to offer fundraisers that can be implemented as outlined in the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines](#). The Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools will continue to guide our practices.

## **KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM AND ENTRY**

Information about communicable disease prevention measures that will be in place in schools will be shared with students and their families. Parents/caregivers will follow the guidelines for Visitors in our schools. We recognize that Kindergarten students are just learning about personal space and this will be an area of learning for them. Hand hygiene will be necessary and effective in adding a layer of protection for the students.

## **MUSIC PROGRAMS**

All classes, programs and activities will continue to occur where;

- K – 12 staff and Grade 4 to 12 students wear masks when indoors. Masks can be temporarily removed while engaging in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument), but must be worn while singing.
- Cleaning and disinfecting guidelines will be followed for shared equipment
- Hand hygiene will be followed
- Music Teachers will access further guidance from [Guidance for Music Classes in BC During Covid-19](#).

## **PHYSICAL and HEALTH EDUCATION(PHE)/OUTDOOR PROGRAMS**

- Spread out students and staff within available space and encourage outdoor activities and programs, as much as possible.
- K- 12 staff and students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear masks during PHE/Outdoor program classes when they are indoors, and a barrier is not present.
- Students are not required to wear masks during high intensity physical activities (e.g. stationary bike, weightlifting, basketball, soccer). Mask use during these activities is left to students' personal choice. Staff are encouraged to move high-intensity physical activities outdoors whenever possible.

- For low intensity activities (e.g. yoga, walking), students are required to wear masks when they are indoors and a barrier is not present.

Why are masks not required during high intensity physical activity? During high intensity physical activity, respiration rates are increased (resulting in a wet mask) and the wearer is more likely to touch their face and adjust the mask frequently. These factors lessen the protective value a mask may offer. In addition, a wet mask is more difficult to breathe through; those wearing masks during high intensity activities should change them as soon as they become wet.

Cleaning, disinfecting and hand hygiene are two extra layers of protection that will be practiced when students and staff are sharing equipment.

## **PLAYGROUNDS**

Playgrounds are a safe environment. Staff will ensure students are practicing proper hand hygiene, and encourage minimal physical contact between students on the playground.

## **SCHOOL LIBRARIES/LEARNING COMMONS**

At this time, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products. As such, the distribution or sharing/return of books or paper-based educational resources to students because of COVID-19 will not be limited.

- Students and staff will practice diligent hand hygiene before and after handling shared equipment and resources

## **SCHOOL SPORTS**

Programs, activities (intramurals, sports team practices, games), sports academies will continue in alignment with the following guidance:

- Following relevant local, regional and provincial public health recommendations and orders for community gatherings and events
- Masks are worn by K – 12 staff, other adults and students grades 4 to 12 when they are indoors and a barrier is not present
  - Students are not required to wear masks during high-intensity sport activities. It is students' personal choice whether they wear masks.
  - For low intensity sport activities, students Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear masks when a barrier is not present.
- Use all available space to spread students and staff out as much as possible.



- Shared equipment can be used and staff will encourage hand hygiene and use cleaning and disinfection guidelines.
- Sports activities should be held outside whenever possible.
- We will use the [Return to School Sports Plan from BC School Sports](#) for further guidance.

### **THEATRE, FILM AND DANCE PROGRAMS**

- Spread out students and staff within available space, and encourage outdoor activities and programs, as much as possible.
- K – 12 staff are required to wear masks during these programs when they are indoors, and a barrier is not present
- Students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear masks during these programs when they are indoors and a barrier is not present, except during high-intensity physical activity.
- Shared equipment will be cleaned and disinfected as per guidelines and proper hand hygiene will be practiced

### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Students can still engage in work placements in accordance with the current guidelines from Provincial Health and Work Safe along with the ministry [Work Experience Program Guide](#).

### **COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

The school district will provide all communications through regular channels (Synrevoice, website, email, Twitter, and Facebook) for parents and partner groups. All schools will post their site-specific Communicable Disease Plans on their websites.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS**

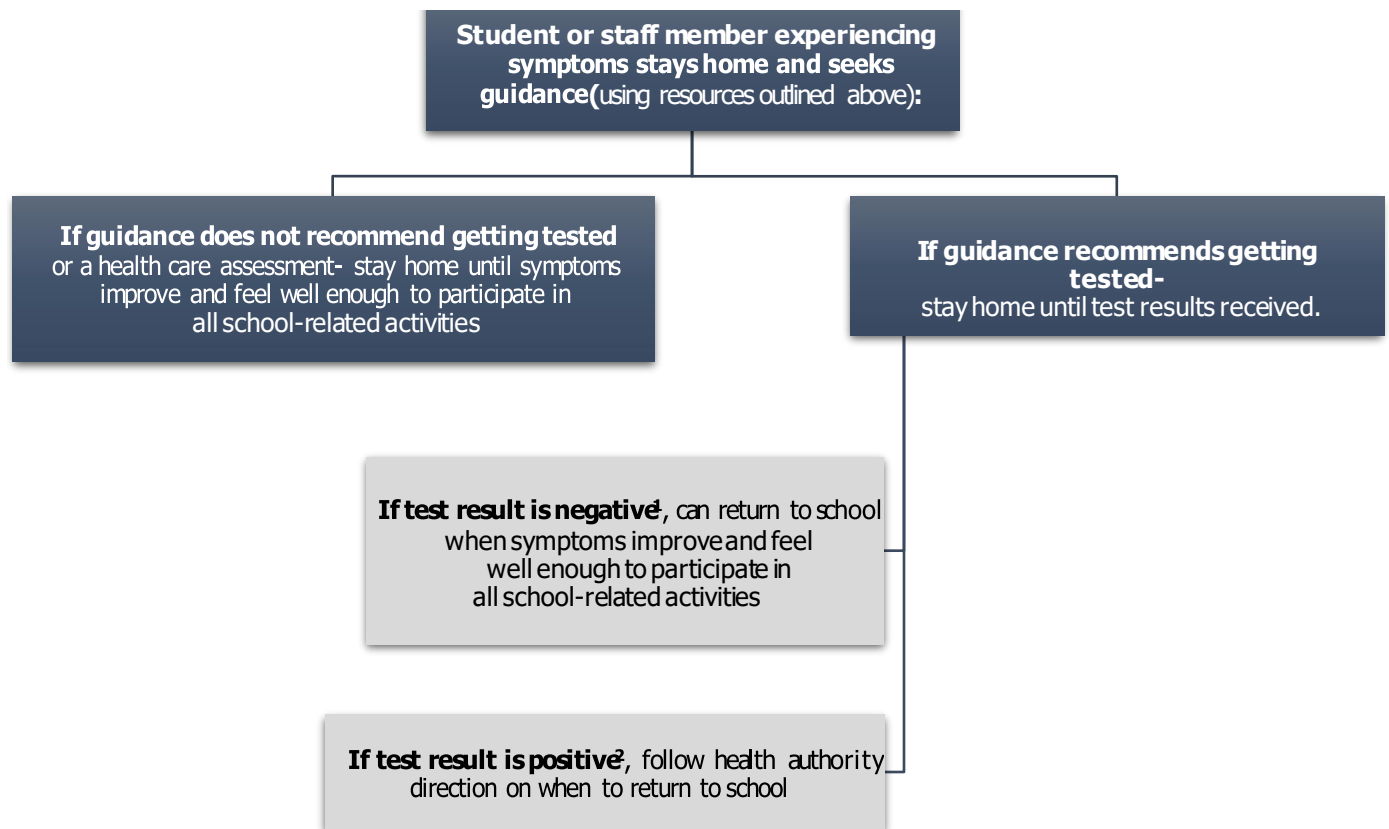
Students will continue to receive service from school-based counsellors. Referrals to community-based services may also be offered.

The Mental Health Literacy Teacher(s) will continue to create District Mental Wellness Challenges each week as well as in-class/online Mental Health Wellness presentations.

Counselling teams will continue to promote student and staff wellness.

## Appendix A: COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School

When a student, staff or other adult can return to school depends on the type of symptoms they experienced and if a COVID-19 test is recommended. See the [K-12 Health Check app](#) [When to get tested for COVID-19](#)nts and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#), or call 8-1-1 or their health care provider.



1. Symptoms of common respiratory illnesses can persist for a week or more. Resting is not needed unless the person develops a new illness. [BCCDC](#) has information on receiving negative test results.
2. Public health will contact everyone with a positive test. Visit the BCCDC website for more information on [positive test results](#)



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