



January 7, 2022

Dear parents/guardians,

We are looking forward to welcoming all students back to school on Monday, January 10. Thank you for your patience while we prepared contingency plans for how we would continue to provide learning if large numbers of staff are sick because of COVID and the Omicron variant. Throughout this pandemic, we have all had to continue to be flexible and prepared to adjust to new protocols. We share this information as part of our ongoing commitment to share changes with students, staff, and parents/guardians as often as needed.

Potential School Closures

School districts, like other employers, have been told to anticipate many absences as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 becomes more widespread.

There are two types of closures that could impact our schools:

- a **health closure**, determined by Island Health, due to unusually high student absences; or
- a **functional school closure** when there aren't enough staff to provide proper care and instruction for students.

If a school must be closed for either of these reasons, the school will announce the closure to students and families through their regular communication methods. During the closure, the school will move to temporary at-home learning and teachers will communicate with parents directly on their class/subject and share materials.

The length of a functional school closure is likely to be five school days but could be shorter or longer as staff absences are re-assessed. The length of a health closure would be determined by Island Health. We encourage families to start planning now for how they will manage if their child's school needs to be closed.

Unfortunately, support for children of essential service workers or children with complex needs will not be available because of a closure, but childcare programs in district schools could run at the discretion of the childcare operator.

Transportation Disruptions

If there is a shortage of bus drivers some routes may also need to be adjusted, delayed and/or cancelled. If that happens, schools will stay open, but students who take the bus will have to find their own way to and from school. We will share any transportation changes with families of students with bus passes on the affected route(s) as soon as possible. Students and parents should also check their school website and the district's social media each morning before leaving for their bus stop each morning.

Daily Health Checks & Face Masks

Daily health checks are still the most important thing we can all do to help keep our schools open and students and staff healthy. Anyone who is feeling unwell or displaying symptoms needs to stay home. Please use the K-12 health check app each day before coming to school: <https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca>

The provincial order requiring all students from kindergarten to grade 12, staff, and visitors to wear masks in all indoor areas, including while at their desks/tables and on school buses, is still in effect. However, medical professionals are now recommending 3-layer masks and so we ask parents to send their child back to school with a 3-layer mask, if possible. We will still have masks available in school offices for those who need them.

Please know that we will continue to try to have schools open and students learning in-person as much as possible for their educational, emotional, and social benefit; closures will be a last resort and we will try to get students back in class as soon as possible.

Dr. Jeremy Morrow
Superintendent of Schools