

September 10, 2021

Re: Back to School in the Fraser Health region

Dear School Staff Members and Community,

As we begin the 2021/2022 school year, we would like to express our appreciation for the hard work and dedication teachers, school staff and school administrators have shown over the past 18 months, and continue to show, as you prepare for a safe return to school this fall.

On August 24, 2021, the province announced new [K-12 COVID-19 safety guidelines](#) for 2021/22. Below we have highlighted some of the key changes, as well as what we can expect to remain the same from last year.

Vaccination:

- Vaccination is the best way to protect our communities and ourselves. Vaccination protects both those who get vaccinated and those who are not yet eligible for vaccinations, such as youth under 12 years of age. Everyone 12 and older is encouraged to walk in to any of our vaccine clinics for same-day immunization as soon as possible. Clinic locations are available at fraserhealth.ca/vax.
- Health and safety measures – such as daily health checks, hand washing and the use of masks – are in effect at schools to protect both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.
- For more information on youth immunization, please review the [BCCDC Q&A document](#), or visit the [province of B.C.](#) and [BCCDC](#) web resources for more information.

Masks:

- At this time, all K to 12 staff, students in grades 4 to 12, and visitors should wear masks in all indoor areas, including at their desks and on school buses.
- Mask use for students in kindergarten to grade three is encouraged.

Daily health checks:

- Students will continue to be required to complete daily health checks, stay home when feeling sick and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- The [K to 12 Health Check website](#) and app can help kids and parents decide if their child should attend school based on their symptoms. Encourage parents to bookmark the [health check website](#) or download the apps for [iPhone/iPad iOS](#) or [Android devices](#).

In-classroom learning:

- Strict physical distancing and cohorting is no longer required. However, schools can continue to create space between people by spreading people out where possible, managing flow of people in common areas to prevent crowding, taking students outside as much as possible and reminding students and staff about respecting others' physical space.

- Schools should continue to apply effective prevention measures such as cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces, ensuring ventilation systems are working properly and providing frequent opportunities for hand hygiene.

COVID-19 exposure at school:

As per provincial direction, public health will notify staff and students who need to take a specific action, such as self-monitoring or self-isolation, as a result of a COVID-19 exposure. The school community will be notified when appropriate, such as in the case of an outbreak, and this will be posted to our website. Public health will continue to provide contact tracing for all positive cases of COVID-19 in schools:

- If a student or staff member is confirmed to have COVID-19, and were potentially infectious while they were at school, public health will investigate to determine if there were any potential close contacts within the school.
- If it is determined that there are close contacts within the school, public health will notify the school administrators and request information to assist with contact tracing and provide guidance on what steps should be taken.
- Public health may then:
 - Recommend 14-day self-isolation if necessary
 - Recommend self-monitoring for symptoms if necessary
 - Provide follow-up recommendations if necessary
- Schools will ensure students who are required to self-isolate are able to continue their educational program. Together, schools and public health officials will determine if any other actions are necessary.
- Parents, caregivers and families will be notified by public health if their child is determined to be a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person.

Resources:

For more guidance and information to support children and youth in school during COVID-19, visit fraserhealth.ca/schools. For general school health resources, please see our [Healthy Back to School Guide](#).

Additional COVID-19 school information and resources can be found on the government of B.C.'s [COVID-19 safe school web page](#) and the [BCCDC's K-12 Schools and COVID-19 web page](#).

As we prepare for the new school year together, Fraser Health remains dedicated to working in close collaboration with our network of partners across all levels of the education system to keep students, teachers and our communities safe.

Sincerely,



Ariella Zbar MD, CCFP, MPH, MBA, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health Authority