



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the Vancouver School District, I am writing to provide an update on the District's actions and prevention measures regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Please be assured that the health and safety of students and staff is our first priority.

District staff works closely with Vancouver Coastal Health, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education. All public health authorities continue to indicate that the risk to local 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 posted to the 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](#).

There are two important ways to prevent and control respiratory viruses in school settings.

The first is for students and staff who are ill with symptoms of a respiratory illness (fever, cough, fatigue and/or muscle aches) to stay home from school and work. The importance of this cannot be understated. If your child is not feeling well, we ask that you keep them home so that they can rest and recover. As always, remember to inform the school of the absence.

The second way to prevent and control respiratory viruses in school settings is to maintain and support good in-school hygiene practices. The following prevention steps are taking place in schools:

- Promoting good respiratory etiquette among staff and students that includes covering the mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow, and then disposing of used tissues in a plastic-lined waste container followed by hand washing.
- Educating students regarding the importance of proper and frequent hand washing and ensuring that hand washing signage is visible throughout schools.
- Ensuring sinks and hand washing stations are frequently checked for supplies and resupplied as needed.
- Reinforcing the importance that students do not share food, utensils, beverages, cups or water bottles.
- Providing frequent direction to custodial staff regarding enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols, with a daily focus on high touch/high contact surfaces in all schools.

The above are common practices during cold and flu season and their importance is emphasized considering COVID-19. Please note that Vancouver Coastal Health regularly updates FAQs on its [website](#) which you may also find helpful.

International School Trips/Spring Break Travel

Like other school districts, our District has decided to cancel some 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 travellers and staff. In making these decisions, District staff considers multiple source of information including but not limited to Government of Canada travel advisories, the Office of the Public Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health and the World Health Organization.

We are also asking parents and staff who are embarking on overseas trips for personal travel to please consider issues such as the possibility of travel extensions, interruptions or potentially being quarantined upon return to Canada. Authorities advise that impacted areas internationally may change and expand as the situation continues to evolve. For current information please refer to the Government of Canada Travel Advisory [website](#).

Again, I want to reassure you that the health and safety of students and staff is the District's top priority. We continue to work very closely with Vancouver Coastal 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.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Hoffman
Superintendent of Schools
Vancouver School District