



December 30, 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

On December 29th, the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) issued a revised Health Order, delaying the full return to school until January 10th. Dr. Bonnie Henry stated, "Schools have safety protocols in place that have kept students and staff in school over the past two years, but as the pandemic changes, our protocols must change, too."

Under the revised order, the return to school is delayed for most students to allow:

- Schools to implement enhanced safety measures for safe in-person learning
- Public Health to learn more about the Omicron variant in our communities and ensure the proper measures are in place to keep students and staff safe

District employees will return to work next week to implement the enhanced safety measures and plan for continuing in-class learning.

During this time, schools will be accessible for a limited number of students, based on the following criteria:

- Students whose parents work in the health care system
- Students with exceptional needs

If your children fall under the two classifications listed above, please email your school principal to confirm that your child will be in attendance during the week of Jan. 4-7th. Contact information for your principal can be found on the [SD91 website](#).

School buses will NOT run on Tuesday, January 4th, to allow the District time to adjust transportation schedules for the limited number of students next week. Further information on bussing for the remainder of the week will be shared on Tuesday afternoon.

All students will return on **January 10th** for regular in-class instruction.

The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with various partners, has developed a [K-12 Health & Safety Addendum](#) to the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12. The addendum asks schools to reinforce existing safety measures, including:

- Using all available space to maximize space between people

- For example, different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations
- Completing [Daily Health Checks](#) and staying home when sick

The addendum also introduces new enhanced measures that schools will plan for next week in order to be fully implemented by Monday, January 10th. These enhanced measures include:

- Implement strategies that prevent crowding during class transition times
- Hold school gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, etc.) virtually. If they must be in-person, limit the number of people to no more than 50% operating capacity
- Hold staff-only gatherings (e.g., meetings, professional development activities) virtually whenever possible
- Limit visitors to those supporting activities that directly benefit student learning and well-being (e.g., new teacher candidates, community counsellors, meal program volunteers, etc.)
- No Spectators are permitted for sports or school events
- Pause extracurricular sports tournaments

The [COVID Safe Schools update](#) builds on existing protocols to minimize the spread of the virus in schools, such as:

- Encouraging everyone who is eligible to get fully vaccinated
- Using available space to spread out and to respect personal space
- Wearing masks following Provincial Health Officer Order on Face Coverings
- Cleaning hands regularly
- Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces at least once a day

The PHO has stated that transmission in B.C. schools reflects transmission in the community and schools with consistently implemented prevention measures have proven to be lower risk throughout the pandemic.

We will continue to share information and updates from your schools directly and on the District's website and social media channels. COVID continues to provide challenges for schools and communities, and we thank you for your patience and understanding as we move into 2022.

Manu Madhok
Superintendent of Schools