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January 7, 2022

Dear SD43 families,

We look forward to welcoming your child back to school on Monday, January 10th.

Please check your email box for communication from your school administration regarding start times, student drop off and student entry points as this information may have changed as part of the updated individual school safety plan.

Over the past week we have been reviewing our health and safety measures. We remain committed to ensuring our students continue to learn in as safe an environment as possible by closely following all the measures put forth in the updated [COVID-19 Safe Schools information](#) and our individual school safety plans. For the last year and half, we have kept schools open and continued face-to-face instruction in large part because of the cooperation of our school communities in following our health and safety protocols. We are grateful for your continued support and diligence.

By now you will also have heard from your school principal regarding the continuing and updated protocols specific to your school. Each safety measure has been carefully considered and tailored to the individual circumstances of your school to maintain a site that is as safe as possible for students and staff. While some procedures and protocols have changed, important actions parents/guardians can continue to take include:

- Completing a [daily health check](#) or [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) and following the advice provided.
- Staying home when sick.
- Encouraging safe practices like mask wearing and hand hygiene.
- Maintaining physical distancing and reduced social interactions, where possible.
- Observing the 14-day wait period for return to school after international travel.

Notifications and Contact Tracing

With the rapid spread and short incubation period of the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19, we have moved into a period where families and individuals must self-manage their symptoms, care, and contact tracing when they believe they have been infected with COVID-19. Short incubation periods associated with Omicron do not allow for effective contact tracing efforts and exposures could result in infection before advance notice could be provided. It is essential that families and individuals use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) and inform their close contacts. Health authorities will no longer be providing school exposure notifications and contact tracing information to school districts for distribution. Further, for reasons of privacy protection, schools cannot release individual contact information for the purpose of an individual to notify others – staff, student, or family. Also, the school will not be able to notify others on their behalf.

Functional Closures

In addition to reviewing and revising safety plans, we have been planning for the possibility of temporary functional closures. A functional closure occurs when we can no longer adequately supervise or instruct children within a school or schools. This situation could arise when, due to staff illness, we have insufficient staff to open a school and provide instruction. If this happens, students will begin learning remotely from home with materials and support provided by the classroom teacher. The maximum period for a functional closure is intended to be 7 days.

We intend to provide families with as much information as quickly as possible if there is a potential functional closure at your school and a shift to remote learning. We recognize that any such closure is stressful for the school community and that sudden changes in routine will cause disruption and inconvenience for many families but hope that such situations will be infrequent. Your school principal will provide more details early next week in regard to functional closures.

We want to keep schools open and continue to provide in-class learning. We do not want to move to a place where schools close and we have to move to remote learning from home, but we need to be prepared. Please continue to follow all the preventative measures, self-monitor for symptoms, and stay home when sick.

Thank you for your support and take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Gartland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent/CEO