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August 27, 2021

Dear SD43 families,

We are excited to welcome your children back into our schools! We will continue to follow COVID-19 prevention and management protocols developed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and BCCDC to keep students and staff safe. Schools will be open and in-class instruction will be offered to all students.

Under challenging circumstances, many students experienced a successful school year as a result of the effective implementation of health protocols and support from our parent, student and staff communities. With an ever-increasing number of people being vaccinated, we are in a much better place to start the school year. We will continue to follow the advice of experts for guidance on health and safety measures in order to maximize educational experiences and opportunities for children.

In the coming days, you will hear directly from your school administrators and teachers with specific information as it relates to individual schools. I wish to make you aware of the following:

- Schools continue to be considered low-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission.
- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools. Everyone eligible is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated (i.e. receive 2 doses) against COVID-19. School exposures are more likely in communities with lower vaccination uptake.
- Local Medical Health Officers may recommend regional prevention measures during times of increased community risk.
- Masks will be required for all staff. Students in grades 4-12 require masks while indoors. In K - grade 3 classrooms, masks will be optional. Exemptions will be implemented, in special circumstances.
- Daily health checks for students and staff will be required before arriving at school each day and those with symptoms are expected to stay home and follow the guidance of health authorities.
- Hand hygiene measures will continue, including frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer.
- No 2m physical distancing will be required but maximizing indoor 'spacing' and continued 'traffic flow' measures will be implemented to further protect students. This may include staggered start times, break times and/or assigned entry and exit doors. Outdoor spaces will be used frequently, as weather allows.
- No cohorts or learning groups will be in place and school schedules and course offerings will mostly return to normal.
- There will be no Gradual Transition option for families. Please discuss learning options with your school principal regarding District Distributed Learning (Apex, COL) opportunities or access to the Hospital Homebound program (there are strict requirements for access to the Hospital Homebound program).
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols will continue based on Ministry of Education guidance.
- Parents are asked to remain outside of the school building, make an appointment to visit a staff member (whenever possible) and following all entrance requirements – including completing a daily health check before arrival, signing in at the office if you are entering the building, and travelling only to the area within the school that they have been directed.
- For the latest information please visit our website at www.sd43.bc.ca.

While we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and manage the ongoing provincial health orders and directives from the Ministry of Education, we appreciate the cooperation and assistance of families in working together to keep our schools safe. If we all do our part, we can minimize risk for our students and the community at large.

We are ready to enthusiastically welcome your child into our controlled and supervised learning spaces on September 7th and we are pleased to share with you an overview of our robust COVID-19 safety plan measures in this letter, with more details and updates to come from your school principal over the coming weeks. I understand you may still have questions specific to your family's circumstances. Our school principals are committed to supporting parents/guardians in making informed choices regarding their child's education.

Once again, I am grateful for the incredible staff in SD43 that continues to rise to the new challenges presented during this health crisis. We all understand how important it is for our children to attend school with their peers and recognize how critical this is for their personal, intellectual, and social development. We look forward to welcoming our students, families and staff to the 2021-22 school year and appreciate your patience and flexibility as we plan for a safe and successful opening!

Sincerely,

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

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent/CEO