



Learning for a Lifetime

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March 31, 2021

Dear SD43 families, students and staff,

I hope that you have had a restful and rejuvenating spring break. As we plan our return to class on Tuesday, April 6, I wanted to inform you of the updated [Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#).

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced on March 29 that, as a result of an increase in new COVID-19 cases province-wide and a higher prevalence of variants of concern, strengthened guidelines for school settings are to be implemented. The revised guidelines support mask wearing for all students in grades 4-12 and all staff in schools. We continue to promote in our schools the key health and safety measures including hand hygiene, physical distancing, and active [daily health checks](#). Those experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should not visit or attend schools.

Here are some highlights within the strengthened guidelines:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Masks
 - Students K-3 are encouraged to wear a mask indoors but are not required to do so – mask wearing remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for very young students.
 - All students Grades 4-12 are required to wear a mask inside schools both within and outside their learning group.
 - All staff K-12 are required to wear a mask inside schools both within and outside their learning group.
 - The use of masks should not reduce or replace other more effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in schools, such as measures that provide multiple layers of protection that reduce the risk of transmission, including:
 - Ensuring students and staff stay home when they are sick or required to self-isolate, including ensuring everyone entering the school performs a daily health check;
 - Maintaining consistent learning groups;
 - Adapting learning environments to maximize the use of space;
 - Ensuring physical distance can be maintained between learning groups; and
 - Frequent hand hygiene.
 - All visitors must wear a mask.
 - Exceptions for staff, students and visitors may include those that cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons, persons that are unable to put on or remove a mask without assistance or if a person is eating or drinking. Details on exceptions may be found [here](#).
- School Gatherings and Events
 - School gatherings should continue to be kept to a minimum and virtual whenever possible.
 - Gatherings should occur only within learning groups and maintain physical distancing measures.

School staff will work with students over the first week to support the transition to the new provincial guidelines. By working together, we can continue to keep schools as safe.

Dr. Bonnie Henry has once again emphasized that schools play an important role in the physical, emotional, and mental growth of children. She reminds us to stay outside, stay apart, and stay with the same group of close contacts.

We look forward to welcoming your children back to school next week!

Sincerely,

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