

March 13, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Update – Morning of March 13, 2020

Dear GVSD staff and families,

In the past 12 hours, there have been new developments regarding COVID-19, which affect our learning community. As things continue to quickly evolve, our School District will be providing information for staff and families to keep everyone informed on how our school communities will be impacted. We ask you to please continue checking your emails and our district website (www.sd61.bc.ca) over spring break for updates about the status of schools.

As of late yesterday afternoon, the Provincial and Canadian Government is advising against all non-essential travel outside of Canada due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The School District continues to adhere to the recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer, Ministries of Health and Education and the Government of Canada, and wishes to remind staff and families of the following:

TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF CANADA

- Anyone who travels outside of Canada, including work-related travel, is asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days upon their return.
- Staff and families who choose not to follow the advice of the Provincial Health Officer do so at their own risk, and potentially the risk of others.
- All international school trips scheduled to take place before April 30th are cancelled. Out of country trips taking place after this date will be under review.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

At this time, the Public Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry is advising that closing schools is not appropriate. Health Minister Dix added, public health officials will be working with stakeholders in the education sector during spring break to continue monitoring the pandemic and B.C.'s response to it.

Effective immediately, all new arrivals to Canada who register to enroll at a GVSD school will be notified of the 14-day self-isolation period prior to starting school. Students and staff currently out of country, arriving home during Spring Break will be required to self-isolate for a 14-day period.

It is important to note that decisions surrounding school closures are made by Public Health Officials in cooperation with Schools District and the Ministry of Education.

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

PUBLIC GATHERINGS

When it comes to public gatherings, public health has advised against any large gatherings over 250 people. As a result, immediately following spring break, assemblies or large gatherings or events at schools will be postponed.

SPRING BREAK – RENTALS AND FACILITIES

Special education programming previously scheduled for students and childcare services will continue over Spring Break. Childcare in the GVSD is provided by third party providers. Any childcare closures will be at the discretion of the provider.

External rentals, beyond K-12 instruction and childcare, will be cancelled to provide space for deep cleaning of facilities.

Managers and custodial staff will be thoroughly cleaning all facilities over the break.

COPING DURING COVID-19

To help minimize the spread of transmission, we are continuing to ask families to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

In addition, we are asking families to talk to their children about the outbreak. We know there is a lot of concern over the spread of COVID-19 and that the current situation may be stressful for many families, especially children. The CDC has many helpful facts and tips on how we can support children and build their confidence to alleviate anxiety: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html

We've also included helpful links below with resources, including the Ministry's Pandemic Response Framework and Planning Guidelines for additional supports.

We understand this is a challenging situation for our families as we head into the holidays—and tough personal decisions will have to be made regarding travel. However, we must take all measures at this time to keep our schools safe and healthy for our students.

Please take good care of yourself and those closest to you. We will continue to stay connected with our learning community over the break.

Sincerely,



Shelley Green
Superintendent of Schools

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One *Learning* Community



Useful Links

- Pandemic Response Framework and Planning Guidelines: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/healthyschools/pandemic_response_framework.pdf
- Information about COVID-19, including advice and guidance to schools, is regularly updated on the BC Centre for Disease Control site: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_schools_childcare_guidelines.pdf Please routinely check this site and its resources.
- All joint statements from Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister of Health Adrian Dix are posted here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health>
- The Provincial Pandemic Coordination plan: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/reports-publications/pandemic-provincial-coordination-plan.pdf>
- KIDS and COVID-19 QA: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)#For--schools--and--childcare](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel)#For--schools--and--childcare)
- CBC Kids along with the PHO produced a kid-centric Q and A video about COVID-19: <https://www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/watch-coronavirus-facts-versus-fiction>
- Ministry of Health response plans - <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/pandemic-influenza>
- Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus>
- BC Centre for Disease Control: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))
- Government of Canada - Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice/210>

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