



Dear parents and guardians,

March 13, 2020

On Wednesday, COVID-19 was confirmed as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and we've seen a sweeping set of societal and cultural changes that directly impact our personal and professional worlds. Today, I have sent a letter to all staff about what the implications are for us as a district. I wanted to follow up with a letter to parents and guardians, so you know our planning and our communications given that spring break is upon us.

As you can imagine, our top priority is to continue to provide excellent educational programs for our community. I am proud of our district, our schools, and public education in British Columbia. Schools are, in many ways, the heart of our community and I am deeply reminded of that through the events of this week.

In the past 24 hours we've seen strong guidance from government and health leaders in many regions of the world to further prevent potential exposure and spread of the coronavirus. Here in British Columbia, our Provincial Health Officer (PHO) announced new directives and measures to help protect our communities. Specifically, the Public Health Officer and government are advising:

- British Columbians should avoid all non-essential international travel, including to the United States.
- Anyone who travels outside Canada is being asked to stay away from school or work for 14 days upon return.
- Event organizers should cancel any gathering larger than 250 people.

In a letter to our staff, we stated that for the health of our schools, students and families and for the broader role we play in our communities, it is critical that we all follow the directives of public health.

Many of you will have made international travel plans for spring break. **If families willingly travel outside of Canada against the advice of the Provincial Health Officer, then we are urging students and parents to stay away from school for 14 days upon their return.** The Provincial Health Officer is asking all British Columbians to comply with this travel ban as part of our civic duty to stem the spread of COVID-19 and we are hoping that all families will help us in our fight to stem the pandemic.

You may have also heard talk of school closures or an extended spring break. The Provincial Health Officer advises that closing schools is not appropriate or advised at this time. There currently are no plans to extend spring break. Public health officials and the Ministry of Education will be working with school districts during spring break to continue monitoring the pandemic and to consider any further measures that may be required.

“Learning, Growing and Belonging Together”



The World Health Organization in declaring a pandemic has stated that it will take a collective resolve by each of us to manage through these times. We know the above messages have a substantial impact on not only ourselves, but all our families and the broader community. We also know information is changing daily. Thank you for your patience and please continue to monitor our website for additional information as it emerges. In closing, please stay healthy and we hope you do indeed manage to have a restful spring break.

Sincerely,

Chris van der Mark
Superintendent of Schools