



April 1, 2021

Dear Parents, Families and Staff:

By now you may have become aware of the revised health and safety guidelines for schools, as announced Monday by the PHO and Ministry, that call for increased mask requirements in schools. We are nearing a pivotal stage with regards to our ongoing pandemic efforts and provincially the cases have risen significantly.

Our school staffs have done a tremendous job ensuring a safe learning environment for students while working tirelessly to adhere to the changing guidelines. Through their hard work (and yours) school exposures have been limited. We adjusted to the increased mask requirements following the post-Christmas spike, and I am confident we will manage these latest changes as well.

The PHO has set forth a “circuit breaker” for these new guidelines, to be revisited April 19th. Some of the key changes are as follows:

- All staff, adult volunteers and visitors, and all Grade 4 to 12 students should wear a non-medical mask or face covering (a “mask”) at all times while indoors at school, subject to the exceptions noted below.

### **Exceptions**

The recommendations above should not apply as follows:

- To a person who is unable to wear a mask because they do not tolerate it (for health or behavioural reasons);
- To a person unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- If the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- If the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. actively playing a wind instrument, high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- If a person is eating or drinking;
- If a person is behind a barrier;
- While providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment), where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements are important.
- Staff, adult volunteers, and all Grade 4 to 12 students should wear a mask at all times while on a bus, though again, there are exceptions.

Please view these documents for a more detailed breakdown:

- [BCCDC](#)
- [K-12 Guidelines](#)

***“Learning, Growing and Belonging Together”***



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Schools, staff, and students have worked together to maintain a sense of normal and calm in this challenging time. I hope, and believe, that despite our personal beliefs regarding these measures, we will continue working together for the benefit of our students and ultimately our communities.

We are beginning to see the roll out of the vaccines and the arrival of spring-like weather. We do indeed have brighter days ahead.

We anticipate schools will be in compliance with the new guidelines by Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Please contact your local school for more information.

Sincerely,

Chris van der Mark  
Superintendent of Schools