

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

We are very pleased to see our students and staff at school this week. We recognize that there are stresses related to sending your children to school, but we want to assure you, plans are in place for any situation that arises. Our students thrive when they are in the school environment, and we will do everything we can to ensure that we provide a safe and welcoming environment for them.

We also want to thank staff for all they are doing for our students. There was a lot to think about with the new directions we have had to take, and staff worked diligently and professionally to be ready to welcome your children back. There have been many conversations, meetings, and wonderful stories of how staff have prepared for your children. Thank you so much.

There has been a lot of information coming out from the Ministry of Education; we wanted to highlight some of the information for you for easy access and hopefully to clarify any questions you may have. There is a very good **COVID-19 Procedures for Managing Illness** summary in this document which should help with all the questions we are getting with regards to COVID and what to do next if someone is positive.

Last week school staff looked at the new health and safety regulations and arranged their practice to ensure they had plans in place that followed as such. You can access any of your schools' communicable disease plans on your school's website.

There are three areas that we hope to provide clarity on:

- **Continuity of Learning**
- **Workforce Plan, Functional Closure, Potential Activity Signals, Public Health Closures**
- **Testing positive for Covid: now what?**

Continuity of Learning

We want to give a special thank you to all our schools' staff as well as district staff who worked diligently last week to ensure our schools were ready and prepared in any situation that may arise. Our continuity of learning plans in schools are strong and we are ready to go with the learning plans for our students if needed.

Along with health and safety, staff were planning for continuing learning in case classes or schools need to pivot to online learning. There are plans in place for each scenario:

- class teacher is sick, and a teacher on call or another teacher replaces: lessons provided
- posting the lesson plans that can be accessible to students (grade dependant) if required
- food provisions for students if required
- technology support for students and staff
- support vulnerable students and students with complex needs

Workforce Plan, Functional Closure, Potential Activity Signals, Public Health Closures

We have created a workforce plan, as well as a plan move to online learning, if we do not have enough staff to function or have a large number of our students sick.

Functional Closure

The definition of a *functional closure* is the temporary closure of a school determined by a school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function and the inability to temporarily replace them.

Workforce Plan

Before a functional closure, we will ensure that we have met our staff shortage protocols that are now in place. This means that we would have utilized all our staff whether it is district staff or our emergency contact list.

For an example, there may be an Education Assistant or a Youth Care Worker in your student's classroom in the event we had no teachers available to cover the class.

When we start to see significant number of absences for staff, the principal will notify district staff and we will start to monitor the school closely. Our goal is to keep students in school.

If there is increasing number of staff absent in either a specific grade or an entire school, we will consider moving to online learning.

We would hope to communicate to you the evening before; however, it may be the morning of. There will be one day for the school staff to prepare prior to transitioning to online learning. We anticipate the closure to be anywhere from 5 to 10 school days, depending on staff wellness. We will communicate to parents as soon as we know we can come back to school.

Potential Activity Signals

A potential activity signal is a threshold that indicates further investigation is warranted by public health to determine if additional actions are required (e.g., disseminate notification to identified grade or school-related to identified increased activity, provide testing guidance and support, implement additional measures, distributing public health information, etc.).

Schools will closely monitor attendance data to determine if they have met a public health determined potential activity signal.

We really appreciate our students and staff indicating if their absence is illness related as this will help us to determine next steps.

When a potential activity signal is met, the school district will notify public health and the school community. Public health, led by our Medical Health Officer, will continue to lead investigations to determine if additional measures are needed. Public health will also monitor provincial and regional data and will connect with schools if they identify further investigation is needed.

Current public health-identified potential activity signals are:

- If school attendance is 10% below historical normal (e.g., the previous years),
- If fewer than 75% of students in a grade are in attendance, OR for smaller schools (e.g., student population under 100) large fluctuations in school absenteeism rates can be due to small numbers of students away, our district staff will contact public health if they determine an abnormal number of students are away due to illness over 2-3 days)
- functional closure is being considered or implemented.

When a potential activity signal is met, schools will notify the grade or school community (depending on which potential activity signal is met.)



School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

COVID-19 Procedures for Managing Illness

1. I am a student or staff who is sick at home or at school on a given day. What should I do?

Stay at home until your symptoms are gone. Seek medical attention if needed. Use the [BC COVID-19 -Self Assessment Tool](#) to determine guidance and recommendations for testing.




If you have any concerns, feel very sick, or your symptoms are not improving, contact your family doctor/nurse practitioner or call 8-1-1.

Students/staff should report their absence at school/work to their administrator. As per Ministry guidance, students and staff do not need to disclose if their absence is specific to COVID-19; however, those who test positive for COVID-19 should be diligent in ensuring their school is aware their absence is illness-related. It is really important to give accurate data when logging in if the absence is illness related as this may be an indication, that the District may need to look at a “Potential Activity Signal”. A potential activity signal is a threshold that indicates further investigation is warranted by public health to determine if additional actions are required (e.g., disseminate notification to identified grade or school related to identified increased activity, provide testing guidance and support, implement additional measures, distributing public health information, etc.).





2. I am a student or staff who tested positive for COVID-19 either through a rapid test or PCR test. What should I do?

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow advice from the BC Centre for Disease Control, found [here](#). Please note, **guidance and recommendations vary depending on an individual’s vaccination status.**

As per the BCCDC, if you test positive for COVID-19, please click on the following links:

-  [Complete an online form to report your test result](#)
-  [Self-isolate and manage your symptoms](#)
-  [Let your close contacts know](#) and [direct your close contacts to the BCCDC instructions for close contacts](#)

Recent public health guidance recommends those who test positive for COVID-19 notify those whom they live with, or who they’ve had intimate contact with. While those who test positive do not need to notify the school or others at school, individuals may still contact a school for this purpose. To protect personal privacy, schools cannot release individual contact information for the purpose of an individual (staff, student or parent/caregiver) seeking to notifying others of their test result. Schools should also not notify others on an individual’s behalf. If an individual contacts a school requesting they facilitate notifying others at school, school administrators (or staff, if directly contacted) can share the following:

-  Anyone who has tested positive using a rapid test should complete the online reporting tool provided by public health and provide all school-related information requested.
-  Public health does not require students or staff to notify our school if they have tested positive for COVID-19, or to notify other individuals at school.
-  To protect personal privacy, we are unable to provide personal contact information for the purpose of notifying others of a test result.
-  We continue to follow public health guidance, including monitoring school absenteeism to help determine if there may be increased school-associated COVID-19 activity.



School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

COVID-19 Procedures for Managing Illness (Continued)

Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when and how to communicate information regarding increased COVID-19 activity within a school. Our school and school district administrators will work with our Medical Health Officer when a potential activity signal is met to determine if specific communications are warranted (e.g., notification to the broader school community).

Close contacts (i.e. those you live with or have spent 15 minutes with when health and safety measures were not in place or were insufficient) who are fully vaccinated will need to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and can participate in routine activities, such as work or school, as long as they do not have any symptoms. Fully vaccinated close contacts should not visit friends or family who are higher risk for severe COVID-19 for 10 days after date of contact. Those who are not fully vaccinated and have not had COVID-19 in the last 90 days will need to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of contact.

Not fully vaccinated and did not have COVID-19 in the last 90 days: You need to self-isolate for 10 days from the day you last had contact with the person who has COVID-19, even if you do not have any symptoms. Self-isolation means keeping away from others to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Visit the [BCCDC website](#) to learn more about how to self-isolate. In addition to the 10 days of self-isolation, you should not visit friends or relatives who are higher risk for severe COVID-19 (e.g. those currently in hospital, long term care, those with compromised immune systems or over the age of 70 years) for 14 days after you were last exposed to COVID-19.

3. What happens if a student or staff becomes sick at school?

Individuals that develop symptoms at school will be given a mask and separated from their classmates or colleagues. Children who are separated will be supervised and cared for until the child has been picked up by a parent or guardian. Staff will be asked to go home as soon as possible. The areas the person used will be cleaned and disinfected.

4. Why is there no contact tracing or exposure notifications in K-12 schools?

The Omicron variant spreads rapidly and, as such, contact tracing is a less effective measure in the timely management of COVID-19. Public Health is no longer able to contact everyone who tests positive.

As Public Health is not contacting every person who tests positive, school exposures will not be issued by Public Health for individual cases. In the event of a declared outbreak, Public Health will issue a public notification.

Public Health will continue to work with schools if, for example, there is a significant increase in absenteeism that is atypical for the time of year and actions are to be taken, such as notification to the parents and guardians of the affected grade or school community.

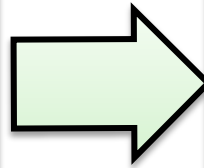


School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

COVID-19 Procedures for Managing Illness (Continued)

Symptoms

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

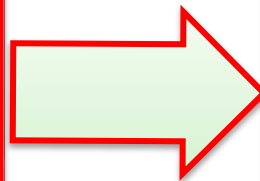


What to do

- If you have mild symptoms and are fully vaccinated, you do NOT need a test
- If you are fully vaccinated, stay home and away from others for 5 days and then return to normal activities if symptoms improve.
- If you are unvaccinated, self-isolate for 10 days.
- Use the B.C. [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to be tested for COVID-19.
- If you feel unwell and are unsure about your symptoms, please contact 8-1-1

If you...

- find it hard to breathe
- have chest pain
- can't drink anything
- feel very sick
- feel confused



What to do

Go to the local Emergency Department or call **911**

Thank you again for entrusting us with your children. We are so pleased to see everyone at school, and we will continue to work through COVID together with you, our staff and our partner groups.

If you have any further questions, please contact your principal or vice principal and they will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have. We also have up to date information on our district website. [School District No. 5](#)

Take care,

Silke Yardley, Superintendent

Nick Taylor, Secretary-Treasurer