



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

August 26, 2020

Dear students, parents and staff:

Thank you for your patience as we worked on our district plans to bring students and staff back in to schools while following our new guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education has approved our district plans and we are now able to share our school plans with you. We had individuals from our staff and DPAC assist us through the process and we are appreciative of everyone's efforts.

Our schools have created their school plans based on the Covid-19 Protocols for School Operations as well as Ministry of Education Guidelines. Each group of schools: elementary, middle and secondary, planned as a group, led by our directors of instruction, in order to come up with their plans. There are slight differences and needs depending on the school configuration but please be assured all of our schools are following the appropriate protocols that were provided by the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Health Officer.

Please read the [Covid-19 Protocols for School Operations](#) which details our protocols. You will find information on learning groups, health and wellness protocols, our cleaning and disinfectant plans, traffic flow, the use of physical barriers, school gatherings, physical distancing, student transportation on our busses, hand washing protocols, personal protective equipment use, students with medical complexity, immune suppression and/or delegated care, students with complex needs, arrival and departure at school, how to move around the building, personal items, visitor access and curriculum to name a few.

**We want to thank all of our schools who worked tirelessly on their Stage 2 school plans that are now posted on their school websites.** You can access the individual school websites through our [district website](#).

All schools will be inviting parents to a **parent question and answer session between August 27 – September 1**. We hope you will be able to attend your child's school session.

To get all students back to full-time, in-class instruction in September, the Provincial Health Officer has recommended the use of learning groups to reduce the number of close, in-person interactions. This will reduce the number of people each student or staff member comes into contact with, thereby reducing the risk of transmission and ensuring quicker contact tracing by health authorities.

A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term (for example, a school quarter, semester or year) and who primarily interact with each other. A learning group

could be made up of a single class of students with their teacher, multiple classes that sometimes join for additional learning activities or a group of secondary school students with the same courses.

Learning groups will be finalized with staff input on the first few days of school and communicated to parents at that time. Teachers and staff outside of the learning group that need to teach/support student learning will follow physical distancing guidelines and use a mask or other personal protective equipment (PPE) when teaching and supporting students. For example, outside staff include elective teachers, Youth Care Workers, Aboriginal Education Support Workers, Education Assistants, Administration or other staff working in the building.

On call/replacement staff coming into the building are considered outside of the learning group and they will also be working with physical distancing and PPE considerations.

When students in middle and secondary schools and all adults are not in their learning group, they will have to use physical distancing and non-medical masks. This will be in common spaces like hallways, bathrooms or in classroom spaces outside of their learning group and on busses. Non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (requiring increased close personal contact from school staff). No student needs to wear a non-medical mask if they do not tolerate it. Two non-medical re-useable masks will be provided to your child if they are in middle or secondary school. In addition, disposable masks will be available at the schools and on busses.

Wearing a non-medical mask, a face covering, or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) for any student or staff member in schools outside of the circumstances outlined above is a personal choice and will be respected. School Administration will keep a detailed learning group list for contact tracing purposes.

### **Elementary Learning Groups**

As learning groups at the elementary level will be comprised of a maximum of 60 people, two classes may be combined to help support learning. The composition of the learning groups will remain consistent for all activities that occur in schools. Students may interact freely with those people in their learning group.

For most classes, students' main interaction will be in their class, but sometimes students may be a part of a larger learning group up to a maximum of 60 students. We continue to organize classes based on class size maximums for our district:

- Kindergarten – 20 students
- Kindergarten/Grade 1 blend - 20
- Grade 1-3 – 22 students
- Any primary blends (Grade 1-3) – 22 students
- Grade 3/Grade 4 blend – 24 students
- Grade 4 -6 – 29 students
- Any intermediate blends grade 4-6 – 26 students

## **Middle School Learning Groups**

Students have been organized into learning groups (two classrooms of the same grade level) of approximately 24 students each to make one group of learners of 48 students. Students will be taught primarily by two teachers who belong to their learning group. The learning group will consist of their regular classroom teacher(s), students and regular scheduled Education Assistants. Grade 8 and 9 will be using a team teaching model which means that the Math/Science and English/Socials Studies curriculum will have one teacher teach to both groups. There will be other subjects offered within the learning group as well. Grade 7 will follow a similar model and teachers will be working together to determine who teaches which subject. This helps to limit contact.

## **Secondary Learning Groups**

Secondary schools have decided on two models in order to adhere to provincial learning group regulations. Regardless of whether or not a school runs a quarter system model where the school year is divided up into quarters with 2 courses at a time, or a modified Semester System where teacher contacts have been greatly reduced, adherence to current class size limits is still in effect.

As our secondary schools are building courses and timetables with an expectation that 100% of students will be in attendance 100% of the time, parents and students can expect to see class sizes and configurations that are very similar to what has been in effect the past several years. While different courses have different class size limits, for the vast majority of secondary courses, the limits are between 24-30 students. A very select group of courses are exempted from these class size limitations, but may face health and safety specific regulations in the Restart Plan which may affect class size.

In provincial guidelines, many courses have specific cleaning requirements that will potentially alter the size of the course and how students meet the outcomes in those courses. An example of this would be an altering of activities in Physical Education. Another example would be courses that are taught outside of a student's learning group such as an after school choir or Leadership class. There may be a necessity for the teacher or students to maintain social distancing or wear PPE to keep the integrity of the learning groups.

## **Supporting Students at School**

As all schools organize their learning groups, a significant number of school and district support staff will provide support outlined by the School Based Team or by the Inclusive Education Plans practicing physical distancing when interacting with the learning group or individual students. The adults will always maintain a two metre distance. In situations where support staff cannot practice physical distancing, other measures must be explored, such as reconfiguring rooms, securing an alternate space to allow for physical distancing, using a mobile transparent physical barrier, or providing virtual services. When none of the strategies outlined above are viable options, staff are required to wear a non-medical mask or a face shield/non-medical mask combination. Face shields are not effective when worn alone.

Non-medical masks with a transparent window will be used where students are hard of hearing or are deaf. The same masks will also be used during speech and language therapy.

When education and operations staff travel from school to school, they will self-check before entering another school, practice all of the district procedures upon entry, and travel to classrooms wearing a non-medical mask. For the most part, where face-to-face instruction or support will take place, the support specialist will travel to the location of the student, rather than the students going to a room where the staff provides support.

Questions regarding support plans for your child or youth should be directed to the school principal or the student services teacher in your school.

## **Bussing**

Busses will be running at regular times. Due to the fact that busses carry students from multiple schools, multiple learning groups and various ages, there will be a few changes that will be implemented:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of busses.
- Bus drivers and students will wash hands before and after completing trips.
- Hand sanitizer will be available on all busses.
- Bus drivers will wear masks at all times, and face shields during loading and unloading.
- Middle and secondary students are required to wear non-medical masks when they are on the bus (disposable masks will be available).
- Non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (the use of non-medical masks for elementary students on the bus is up to the parent/guardian's discretion).
- Bus line-ups/changes will be set up to prevent crowding and allow for physical distancing.
- Consistent seating arrangements will be utilized.
- Within household/learning group.
- Single seats or window where available.
- Loading/unloading protocols.
- Up to date passenger lists maintained for contact tracing.

While we are working to provide the safest environment possible, we recommend private transportation or walking where available.

## **Health and Safety**

We have worked extensively on District level protocols for the safe return to school and each school has used these to prepare the school specific plans. We will spend two days with staff before students return to ensure all employees are familiar with the plans. In addition, we will work with students to educate them on the changes and answer questions or concerns they may have.

One of the greatest preventative measures involves staying home when showing any symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms and the self-assessment checklist are below, and we want to highlight that the parent/guardian is responsible to complete this assessment on a daily basis before the student leaves for school. Our staff will also complete this self-assessment daily.

Daily Health Check				
1.	Symptoms of Illness*	Does your child have any of the following symptoms?	Circle One	
		Fever	Yes	No
		Chills	Yes	No
		Cough or worsening of chronic cough	Yes	No
		Shortness of breath	Yes	No
		Sore throat	Yes	No
		Runny nose/stuffy nose	Yes	No
		Loss of sense of smell or taste	Yes	No
		Headache	Yes	No
		Fatigue	Yes	No
		Diarrhea	Yes	No
		Loss of appetite	Yes	No
		Nausea and vomiting	Yes	No
		Muscle aches	Yes	No
		Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	Yes	No
		Dizziness, confusion	Yes	No
		Abdominal pain	Yes	No
		Skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes	Yes	No
2.	International Travel	Have you or anyone in your household returned from travel outside Canada in the last 14 days?	Yes	No
3.	Confirmed Contact	Are you or is anyone in your household a confirmed contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19?	Yes	No

Hand hygiene will also be an important preventative measure we will rely on. Education and demonstrations will be provided and we will work diligently to remind students and staff of the importance of this process.

The documents we prepared are extensive and we encourage you to reach out with any questions or concerns. We have followed the guidelines from the Public Health Officer, Ministry of Education, BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafe BC. Please know your child and our staff safety is our greatest priority.

### Summary

All of the school plans are now on the individual school websites. You can also access them through our [district website](#). Please attend the important parent session that your principal will be inviting you to between August 27 and September 1.

## September 10, 2020

All students will attend school full time starting September 10. Busses will run on a regular schedule. During the first few weeks schools will be teaching students about the new protocols that will be adhered to following the [District Covid-19 Protocols for School Operations](#).

Please contact your school principal if you have any questions about the school plan. There will be some details they are still working on. It will feel different this year; you may not get your timetable or know which learning group your child is in before September 10 but that is because rebuilding timetables and rescheduling from June has taken a significant amount of time.

We are really looking forward to having everyone back to school. We are very proud of the work that the district has done in a very short period of time in order to meet all the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Health Officer.

For those parents who choose homeschooling or distributed learning we have links on our [website](#) to help support. Please contact your school principal if you would like to have a conversation around your child's best option.

We have excellent plans to bring our students and staff back to school and we are looking forward to seeing everyone. If you have any questions for Alan Rice or myself please [contact us](#).

Alan Rice  
Secretary Treasurer

Silke Yardley  
Superintendent