



August 14, 2020

Dear parents/guardians,

As you are likely aware, over the last couple of weeks, the Ministry of Education has made some announcements on the start of school in September and changes because of COVID-19.

First, on July 29, the Minister of Education along with Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, announced the plan for all K-12 students to return to school full-time in the fall. Then, on August 12, the Minister of Education announced that the start of the school year would be delayed, giving students and staff an orientation week to familiarize themselves with new health and safety measures.

Only teachers and other school staff will be in schools on September 8-9 and students will return to school on September 10-11. Depending on the student's grade level these may be part days like our first couple of days back to school in previous years. All students, with the possible exception of kindergarten students and their gradual entry schedule, will be in school for full-day instruction no later than Monday, September 14.

In September, students and staff will return to school using a cohort model. The intention of this model is to reduce the number of in-person, close interactions a person has in school without requiring physical distancing to constantly be practiced.

At elementary and middle schools, a cohort can be up to 60 people, including both students and staff. At secondary schools, the cohort limit is 120 students and staff.

This is a complex restart for schools and means that we are having to rethink many ways our schools usually operate, such as the structure of classrooms, how students move between classes, staggered breaks, student transportation, and more.

Our school district is working on developing school specific plans using the guidelines developed by the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure that schools are as safe as possible and are working quickly, but thoughtfully, to carefully determine all the logistics for student and staff safety. **Specific details on the first few days of school and this plan will be shared with parents and the community on August 26.**

We appreciate that a return to full-time in-class instruction has been received with mixed emotions. Some families are eager to see the return of some normal routines and some are anxious about whether a return to school is safe.

In accordance with the School Act, there are some options for parents who do not want their child to return to in-person classes. School District 72 has been a provincial leader in the development of distributed learning opportunities and has several alternate learning options available, such as our eBlend (K-9) and eBos (10-12) programs. Please visit our distributed learning website, [72Ways2Learn](https://www.sd72.bc.ca/72Ways2Learn), to find out more about these programs.

Again, we appreciate that there are a lot of considerations for parents and we support you in making the right decision for your family's personal circumstances. Our next communication to parents on August 26 will include as much detailed information as possible to try to help you with these considerations. There will also be an opportunity through a special public meeting of the Board of Education on August 25 to learn more and ask questions about the September restart plan.

Your child's school will reach out to you before school opening to ask if your child will be returning to school or if you would like to speak with someone about other district options. You will also be able to connect with your child's school if you have questions as they open the first week of September.

In the meantime, further details of the BC Ministry of Education's stage 2 return to school can be found on the provincial website at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school>, which is posted on the school district's COVID-19 information webpage at www.sd72.bc.ca.

As you enjoy these last few weeks of summer break please know that we are working diligently behind-the-scenes to welcome students back to classrooms and schools with all the necessary health and safety requirements in place so that they can focus on their learning. We will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 and rely on the guidance and direction of public health officials.

Schools will look different for students this fall and until there is an effective treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. Despite this, we are looking forward to welcoming our students back again and are grateful for your participation, patience, and support as we respond to this provincial health emergency.

Stay safe and stay healthy.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jeremy Morrow
Superintendent of Schools

