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August 26, 2020

Dear SD43 Families,

I am writing to inform you of the SD43 plans for the Stage 2 reopening of district schools for September 2020.

SD43 leadership, administration and staff have worked hard over the past couple of months to create safe and controlled environments for our children. Schools have been cleaned, protocols have been put in place and procedures have been developed to provide the best possible conditions for students and staff to safely return to school. All local SD43 planning has been within the guidelines prepared by the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education. School districts received operational guidelines for school restart and all this information has been made available to SD43 families on school websites, in addition to the district FAQ page at www.sd43.bc.ca/faq.

We are excited to welcome your child into our controlled and supervised learning spaces on September 10th and we are pleased to share with you an overview of our robust COVID-19 safety plan measures in this letter, with more details and updates to come from your school principal over the coming weeks.

For All Students

- The first few days of school will be an orientation period where students are coached on the protocols and procedures that are integral to the safe return to school.
- We are planning for students to attend school every day.
- Some schools may include staggered start and dismissal times, staggered lunch and other breaks, as well as controlled traffic flow to decrease contacts and hallway interactions.
- Students will be in learning groups/cohorts to reduce and manage the numbers of close contacts at school.
- No school-wide assemblies or other large gatherings will be held.
- Outdoor learning will be encouraged.
- Regular handwashing will be actively promoted. Handwashing stations have been identified within school buildings and additional stations have been added where needed, like near portables or areas away from washrooms and other permanent sinks.
- Hand sanitizer has been purchased and provided to all SD43 buildings and its use will be encouraged.
- Water fountains have been turned off and students are encouraged to bring refillable water bottles for personal use. Also, students will be strongly discouraged from sharing water bottles or any food items.
- Enhanced cleaning of buildings and high traffic areas are prioritized.
- At home, prior to leaving for school, students should undergo a daily health check with a responsible adult. If a student feels unwell or exhibits any symptoms such as coughing, sneezing or fever, that child should not attend school.

For Elementary Students

Students and staff are being grouped into cohorts that essentially consist of their class, teacher and required support staff, making a group smaller than the provincially recommended 60 individuals. Within this learning group, individual physical distancing will be maintained. Staggered start times, break times and end times will be implemented to distance

cohorts from each other in addition to physical distancing measures such as entry and exit points around the school that are not in close proximity to each other. It is requested that parents/guardians drop off students while maintaining physical distancing from other members of the school community and that they vacate the area as quickly as possible to reduce potential contact with others.

Age-appropriate handwashing and hygiene will be taught and reinforced upon entry to school buildings (in the morning and upon return from breaks, etc.), expectations will be outlined around the restricted movement within the school and physical distancing measures will be reinforced.

For Middle Students

Middle schools will operate on the same model as elementary schools around learning groups/cohorts, protocols and procedures. Face masks for students and staff will be made available and, though their use is optional, the use of masks in areas of the school where physical distancing is difficult to maintain such as hallways and common areas will be strongly recommended. Exploration classes will be offered in a modified in format.

For Secondary Students

Face masks for students and staff will be made available and, though their use is optional, the use of masks in areas of the school where physical distancing is difficult to maintain such as hallways and common areas will be strongly recommended.

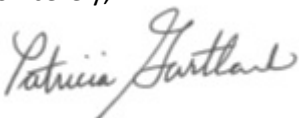
Students have again been grouped into cohorts smaller than the provincial recommendation of 120. Details specific to your school will be forthcoming but the major change involves a switch to a 'quarter system' to divide the school year, consisting of 4 terms, instead of the usual 2. This quarter system is designed to allow for much smaller learning groups while maintaining as many course selections as possible. Once students are slotted into their learning groups and quarter schedule, no changes can be made in order to limit contacts between students. Once a quarter is complete, students will be assigned to new classes and cohorts and then maintain that learning group until the end of that quarter term. Again, school-specific information on cohorts and timetables will be provided directly to families via school principals.

In Conclusion

I understand you may still have questions specific to your family's circumstances. Our school principals are committed to supporting parents/guardians in making informed choices regarding their child's education. Principals will address concerns on a case-by-case basis in regard to options for immunocompromised students and families or those students with special needs. Options may include gradual entry and return to school, expanded access to the district Hospital Homebound program and/or expansion of district Distributed Learning programs. Additional health and safety information will be shared by school principals over the coming weeks as direct communication continues.

Once again, I am grateful for the incredible staff in SD43 that continues to rise to the new challenges presented during this health crisis. We all understand how important it is for our children to attend school with their peers and recognize how critical this is for their personal, intellectual, and social development. I also appreciate the faith and trust placed in the district by our communities to safely provide education to local children. I look forward to welcoming our students, families and staff to the 2020-21 school year and appreciate your patience and flexibility as we plan for a safe and successful opening!

Sincerely,



Patricia Gartland
Superintendent of Schools, CEO