

March 6, 2020

Dear GVSD Parents and Guardians:

RE: COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) update

The Province announced eight new confirmed cases of COVID-19 yesterday, for a total of 21 in the province. Six of the new cases were linked to travel (or are close contacts of people who had travelled) to Iran. One case is a visitor from Seattle, Washington. One person was a community case on the Lower Mainland with no international travel.

Please see joint statement from Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0062-000393>

What does this mean for schools?

There are many considerations the school district is taking to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. Following direction from the Ministry and public health officials, the School District is increasing cleaning and hand hygiene to help prevent the transmission of viruses. Efforts are being put in place to daily clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces. This includes desktops, chair backs, table tops, light switches, door knobs, handrails, water fountains and washrooms.

To help prevent the spread of viruses, we are also asking families to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Follow these steps as you would the common cold or flu:

- Proper hand-washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Alcohol-based hand rubs to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled.
- Do not touch your face/eyes/mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow.

For additional information please review reference links at the end of the letter.

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How does COVID-19 affect travel plans?

The public health officer advises COVID-19 is currently found in 80 countries and people should carefully assess and have a low tolerance for international travel. The PHO also advises people with underlying health issues should reconsider trips at this time.

We are aware of emerging concerns regarding coronavirus and student travel. Our School District continues to closely monitor travel advisories and has recently cancelled some schools trips over the spring break due to level three travel advisories in some regions and other concerns.

The safety of our children is always paramount of all other considerations.

If you return from travel and do not feel well. It is advised you stay home when you are sick.

School Closures

Any consideration of school closures would be determined by public health officials in consultation with the Ministry of Education, school districts and schools and would be specific to any impacted school. There are plans in place for those kinds of measures should they become necessary.

For more information on COVID-19:

- Mar. 6, Province activates advance COVID-19 response to protect British Columbians: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0012-000404>
- KIDS and COVID-19 QA: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)#For--schools--and--childcare](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel)#For--schools--and--childcare)
- CBC Kids along with the PHO produced a kid-centric Q and A video about COVID-19: <https://www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/watch-coronavirus-facts-versus-fiction>
- Mar. 4, joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0060-000380>
- Mar. 3, PM joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0058-000370>
- Mar. 3, AM joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0056-000365>
- Mar. 2, joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0054-000361>
- Feb. 25, joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0048-000330>
- Feb. 24, joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0043-000320>
- Feb. 20 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0041-000304>
- Feb. 19 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0039-000294>

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- Feb. 14 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0036-000284>
- Feb. 6 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0025-000236>
- Feb. 4 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0023-000222>
- Feb. 3 joint statement from the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officer - <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0020-000210>
- Ministry of Health response plans - <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/pandemic-influenza>
- Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus>
- BC Centre for Disease Control: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))
- Government of Canada - Novel Coronavirus in China Travel Health Notice: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice/210>

For past provincial updates, GVSD has posted links to the health announcements on the district's website: www.sd61.bc.ca

If at any point, you have health concerns, please call your healthcare provider at 8-1-1.

Sincerely,



Shelley Green
Superintendent of Schools

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