

## School District 69 (Qualicum)

### September 2020 Restart Plan

#### QUESTIONS and ANSWERS (Q & A)

August 13, 2020

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Following are questions asked of the Board and senior staff during the Board's special public meeting held by Zoom on August 12, 2020. Further opportunities for Q and A will come during the Board's Zoom Town Hall scheduled for Thursday, August 20, 2020. Some of the questions below have been combined to capture similar themes in a number of separate questions. We hope that we captured all that was asked at the Board meeting on August 12.

Note that all of our planning is in keeping with the requirements of the education restart plan as found at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school>.

**Q: What is the plan for elementary learning groups?**

A: Our emerging plan will have children in their classes as scheduled, with students only interacting with students from one other class in order to stay within a learning group of no more than 60. We are hoping to organize for three teachers to work with those two classes.

**Q: How will the elementary day be organized?**

A: We are looking at having the elementary school day start 30 minutes later than usual and have the lunch break included as activity-based instructional time. Teachers would start the day with common prep time prior to students' arrival, meaning that prep teachers (music and PE) would be able to join learning groups and not move from class to class as in non-COVID times.

**Q: What is the plan for secondary learning groups?**

A: Plans are still being formed and there are various options, but we expect to organize in a quarter system with two courses at once, rather than a semester system with four classes at once. Students would be in their regularly scheduled A block for the morning and in their regularly scheduled C block for the afternoon. For the purposes of staying within the rule of no more than 120 students interacting with each other, the afternoon class would have some students in class with distancing while other students are in another setting within the school (library perhaps, or multi-purpose room, with distancing) for a hybrid model of learning. Halfway through the quarter, the C block afternoon class would become the home base for all students in the class, and A block would move to hybrid. Alternatively, we may develop a schedule where A block is as scheduled in the morning and in the afternoon, students opt into a selection of courses within their learning group of no more than 120.

**Q: What are students' opportunities for Distributed Learning (DL) through CEAP?**

A: CEAP is taking registrations for full-time students in K-9 and course by course enrolment for students in grades 10-12.

**Q: What is the plan for transportation, including courtesy riders?**

A: Our transportation system is built and funded by government for eligible riders. We have been fortunate to be able to find seats over the years for what we refer to as "courtesy riders" who sign on for a fee. As eligible riders are only those who attend their catchment area school and live outside the walk limits, courtesy riders include students who attend

district programs including French Immersion, and students who are in before or after school childcare programs. Prior to COVID we were able to include large numbers of courtesy riders, in fact normally all who apply. With COVID, our transportation requirements have changed. We are to make every effort to distance children on buses and to have children share seats with members of their immediate family or their designated learning group at school (a maximum of 60 students in elementary and 120 students in secondary).

We are also encouraged to require masks for at least the older students. We believe that we can comply with the expectations of the health authority if we limit students to 2 per seat rather than 3, require all students to wear masks, and create a seating plan for each bus that, as possible, has students sitting with members of their family or learning group. Unfortunately, with our inability to go beyond 2 students per seat, we reach our capacity for each of our buses with eligible riders, meaning that we expect that we will not be able to provide transportation for courtesy riders. That may change as we see how many eligible riders confirm their intention to ride buses this year, and we have let people know that courtesy riders will be accepted on a first come first served basis. We continue to accept those applications through our transportation department.

**Q: French immersion students should not be considered courtesy riders as we are almost all required to attend out of catchment to attend this program in the district. These students more than any require busing to attend this program as are coming from longer distances around the district.**

A: While this is not a question, we hope that this matter has been answered above. We are sorry that we do not receive transportation funding for out of catchment students including those who are accessing a district program.

**Q: Would the later start time be a good opportunity to do another round or two with the buses to account for courtesy riders? Families with working parents having kids in before/after school care really rely on bus availability.**

A: We will take this into consideration, but a later start for school would normally mean a later bus run, rather than creating space for two bus runs.

**Q: What can we do about large numbers of people now coming into our family bubble?**

A: We appreciate that the learning groups create many more contacts that people are used to, and that that is troubling. We are following the direction of the provincial health officer and will do everything we can to minimize contact and to limit learning group sizes to the required maximum or less.

**Q: How will you support children with IEPs and Education Assistant support?**

A: Students with IEPs will be supported through their support systems and school-based teams as in non-COVID times. That can include EA support directly in the home for children who need to be at home.

**Q: How will the children that need to support fit into the classroom? Will their EA be added to the number of 30? How will you make these children feel that they will not be excluded from their peers?**

A: As per our ongoing commitment to full inclusion and diversity, children will be scheduled into their classes as normal, within the learning group and distancing parameters as described above.

- Q: Will masks be mandatory for all students, staff and teachers at school? On the bus?**  
A: We will receive our final instructions re transportation next week, but we anticipate requiring masks for all students on buses. As well, possibly masks in common areas at secondary.
- Q: Will staff at schools be doing temperature checks or how will we know students and staff are symptom-free?**  
A: The health authorities have indicated that we will not be doing temperature checks and that we will be requiring anyone coming into a school or work setting to declare that they are symptom free. See the CDC website for a list of symptoms.  
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools#Schools>.
- Q: Would there be an option for French immersion students to switch to distributed learning at CEAP and then return to their French Immersion schools after the pandemic?**  
A: We are determined not to have COVID affect children's life chances, although we know that may not always be possible. In the case of a return to French Immersion after time away, it is possible that after a year out of the program a student could re-engage at the next level. That would be dependent on the student remaining connected to language acquisition in some way during the time away, which would be a matter that parents could take up with the Immersion school, whether Oceanside or Ballenas. There is a slight chance that the spot that was vacated might be taken by someone on a wait list, but currently we only have a wait list for kindergarten Immersion.
- Q: If bus passes are not extended to French immersion courtesy riders, and therefore my children will be unable to attend school as they do not have transport, what are our options?**  
A: Your options in this case would be to register in your neighbourhood school of CEAP for the duration of COVID and then move back to French Immersion later as per the previous answer.
- Q: Can you explain what will happen if an employee becomes ill or has any of the listed symptoms and is required to stay home?**  
A: We will follow the direction of the health authority as it relates to symptoms and absences. Any employee who is ill would be off accessing sick time but there will be certain cases where the absence is precautionary and the employee will be allowed to work from home assuming that there is meaningful work to be done from home. The employee would be back-filled at work as necessary, including via booking a TTOC for a teacher when necessary. We will try to minimize the number of learning groups that any TTOC or on-call CUPE employee is engaging with, and ensure that distancing and hygiene measures are in place.
- Q: How do known issues like seasonal allergies play into that list of symptoms? if we have a child who has a seasonal allergy and as a result has a runny or sniffling nose - do they need to stay home until the seasonal allergies subside?**  
A: We have been told by the health authority that students or staff with seasonal allergies may in certain cases be able to attend school or work. The key will be what is the "normal baseline" for that person. If routine seasonal allergies are normal and the symptoms are no different than ever, then we are told that the person can continue to attend school or work.

**Q: Historically the province/district has supported real infrastructure to support learning; to what extent are divestitures of real buildings in favour of increased investment in coordinated technological support of the learning experience being considered?**

A: Our Board will continue to invest in technology, with more investment now being targeted to portable technologies in support of teaching and learning that may be at a distance. The Board has budgets in place for this and will access those budgets as necessary. And yes, some of those funds are in local capital accounts that have accrued through divesting of property over the years through sale or lease.

**Q: When a teacher, other staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19 how will the district react? When will we hear about the contact tracing policy from the district?**

A: A positive COVID test will result in an immediate response that will be completely determined by the health authority. Contact tracing and the need for any isolation for anyone associated with that individual will be determined by the health authority.

**Q: Will testing be mandatory? If not, will parents will be alerted when a child within their child's cohort has symptoms?**

A: Testing will not be mandatory, but parents will be required to keep their children home if the children have symptoms. We have been advised by the health authority only to share information about illnesses within the learning group when told to do so by the health authority.

**Q: Does a child with any cold/flu/upper respiratory symptom need to be sent home for two weeks, and what scenarios will require mandatory isolation for a student? For the student's family?**

A: Anyone with symptoms will be required to stay home until the symptoms are cleared up. Whether or not and what kind of actual isolation is required will be as determined by the medical health officer.

**Q: Will high school still have elective classes, or just core academic classes?**

A: Secondary schools, as noted above, will be scheduled in ways that allow students to access all electives to the extent possible. Our plan now includes provision of all courses as in non-COVID times, with some adjustments as necessary to programs that put students into close proximity and may have students outside their designated learning group (such as band).

**Q: Is there a plan to adjust and control ventilation in the schools based on the learning groups?**

A: All school ventilation systems have been increased from 20% to 30% which is the recommended level.

**Q: Is not distancing 2 meters in direct conflict with all advice from health authority on COVID?**

A: We will follow the advice of the health authority in this regard. If 1 meter is an acceptable distancing then that is what our requirement will be. We will learn more about this in the coming days.

**Q: How about school sports teams, clubs etc?**

A: We are awaiting final instructions on school athletics. We understand that some sports may be allowed if they allow for physical distancing and/or other safety measures. For now, we are taking a cautionary approach and advising that school sports may be suspended. More to come on that.

**Q: Why can you not go immediately to a hybrid system of DL mixed with in-class from the start of the semester; so that when the COVID levels increase the students can easily transition over?**

A: Our elementary model has all children in class, with the ability for us to shift to hybrid environments (some in-class, some at home) if and when we move to stage 3 or 4. Secondary students may have a form of hybrid for half of the day as we start the year, and the transition to hybrid for all classes should be manageable within the model. We do not have the option of starting in stage 3 or stage 4.

**Q: Regarding dual-registered students (KSS/CEAP or BSS/CEAP), how will they be integrated into electives given learning groups?**

A: Students in grades 10-12 who are registered in CEAP and cross-enrolled in KSS or BSS will continue to have the opportunity to register for electives in the neighbourhood schools. In some cases that student will join fully as a member of that learning group, while in other cases they may need to participate with physical distancing and/or a mask. Safety will continue to be a primary concern. Students in grade 8 and 9 who register with CEAP are fully funded there without the opportunity to register for a Ministry-funded course in the neighbourhood school, but as in the past we will usually be able to absorb that student into the neighbourhood school for electives depending on room in the course.

**Q: If remote learning part time goes in effect will we get a break on school taxes? Part time learning, part time pay?**

A: Whether we are serving children on site or at home, all of our employees will be working full time to provide full time learning for children. In terms of taxes, the provincial government collects taxes for funding of all provincial services including education (provincial collection, provincial distribution, not local).

**Q: Will playgrounds and gym equipment be cleaned in-between classes?**

A: The health authority provides our direction for cleaning playground equipment and they have advised that it is not necessary.

**Q: Will there be enough space and resources in CEAP for everyone who wishes to enroll, or might there be limited class sizes in DL programs?**

A: As of now we are accepting all applications for DL programs at CEAP.

**Q: What will be the cleaning protocols for the schools, including for washrooms that will be used throughout the day:**

A: These will be described in our August 26 publication of the plan as submitted to the Ministry of Education, but in terms of washrooms, these are considered high touch areas and will be cleaned and stocked throughout each day.

**Q: Will schools have staggered start and finish times?**

A: We are planning to elementary schools start at their usual times, possibly one half hour later, but not staggered per se. We would have children arrive into the school through outside classroom doors for distancing. At secondary, if we stagger start times we will have that occur within a relatively short window of time.

- Q: I read on the Ministry page that on-site before and after school care would be provided. what does this look like in SD69?**
- A: We do have on-site childcare in some of our schools, but as of now we are not adding childcare settings to schools beyond what is currently in place.
- Q: Will there be any possibility to adjust children's placement in elementary classes based on their current learning status, or at least find out about their placement in advance, so parents could factor it into their decisions about whether to switch to DL or not?**
- A: Children will be in their age appropriate grades in elementary school and supported as needed based on their needs.
- Q: Would the SD then have extra teachers to help support the teachers so they are not expected to teach both in person and online? That is a huge workload for our teachers.**
- A: Our planning with teachers would include provision for supports beyond the classroom teacher so that we don't expect the kind of hybrid we required in June. That may be more challenging in secondary. In elementary we are looking to build teams of three teachers for pairs of classrooms, within which there would be some time for home support.
- Q: If it is safe to send the kids back to school in person, can we expect that the next board meeting will be held in public?**
- A: This will be determined by the Board. There is a town hall meeting on August 20 being held by Zoom primarily in order to allow more participation than would be allowed in person.
- Q: Will there be a survey to parents once the plan is created to see what parents plan to do?**
- A: Yes, we will have outreach from the schools to determine the status of each child for September.
- Q: Will secondary students have a say in the planning?**
- A: Our secondary administrators will reach out to students, and we will host a district student leadership meeting the week before school starts if possible.
- Q: For elementary school classes is it possible for the classes to remain the same as last year to limit the stress on the kids as there will be so many new stresses for the kids this year? if the classes and teachers are the same I would think that would give the kids something familiar to go back to.**
- A: We understand this thinking, and it has merit, but we have formed the classes for the next grades for students and will be having children return to those new classes.
- Q: Has the board asked our PHO why students and teachers are being asked to accept a lower safety standard than other industries? Shouldn't decreased class sizes be a priority? I can't eat at a restaurant at a table of more than 6 people, but my kid can spend a whole day with 23 other kids + teachers? Why the double standard?**
- A: We have been in regular communication with the local medical health officer and have received ongoing instruction from the provincial authority through the Ministry of Education. We will be receiving more information to share with parents in the coming days.