



# SCHOOL DISTRICT No.69 (QUALICUM)

## Revised Health and Safety Measures

**February 4, 2021**

On Thursday, February 4, Minister of Education Jennifer Whiteside and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced enhancements to school and district health and safety measures. While not extensive, these changes are an important next step at a time when we are all hoping that the vaccine will get ahead of the emerging COVID variants.

The announcements include stronger requirements for mask wearing for middle and secondary students as well as staff, strengthened guidelines for physical education and music classes, a rapid response team in each health authority to help if there is a significant exposure/outbreak at a school, updated safety plans to be implemented at each school, and a health-checker app to support daily screening.

The new safety guidelines include that all **middle and secondary students** and **K-12 staff** will now be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas, including when they are with their learning groups. The only exceptions are when people are:

- sitting or standing at their seat or workstation in a classroom;
- behind a barrier;
- eating or drinking; or
- medically exempt, in which case distancing and barriers are key

Prior to these changes, masks were required for middle and secondary students and all K-12 staff in high-traffic areas, like hallways, school buses, and outside of classrooms or learning groups when they could not safely distance from others. Those requirements remain in place.

For **elementary** students (grades K to 4), wearing masks indoors remains a personal family choice. In SD 69 our Board of Education has deemed that in the absence of middle schools our mask requirement for students as described above is for all students in grades 5 to 12.

For **all staff**, including in non-school settings, we are to “ensure that staff practice physical distancing (2m) during face-to-face meetings. Staff are required to wear masks when indoors, unable to maintain physical distancing, and a barrier is not present.” Additionally, **any visitor** to a school or worksite is required to wear a non-medical mask.

**Guidelines have also been strengthened** for physical education and music classes. High intensity physical activities are to be held outside as much as possible. Shared equipment or items, such as weight machines, treadmills or musical instruments, can be used only if they are cleaned between use, compliant with strict school and health authority sanitization guidelines. Students using equipment or playing instruments should also be spaced at least two metres apart and masks are to be used when singing.

**Strengthened health and safety guidelines also include these updates:**

- Activities that include prolonged physical contact should not be a part of physical education or any other classroom learning. For example, activities like tag or touch football are lower risk, since students may only come into contact with each other briefly, whereas activities like wrestling or partner dancing should be avoided.
- All K-12 staff are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering when they are in a classroom and they are away from their individual desk or workstation.
- Staff should be assigned to one learning group whenever possible. Staff interacting without a transparent barrier and with more than one learning group, or with students in more than one school, are to practice physical distancing.
- Staff must practice physical distancing and wear non-medical masks for any face-to-face meetings or interactions, including in the staff room. Staff also must hold meetings virtually whenever possible.
- Any visitor to a school is required to wear a non-medical mask.
- Even when wearing a mask, students and staff must still practice physical distancing whenever possible. Exceptions will be made for people who do not tolerate masks for behavioural or health reasons.
- Within learning groups, physical distancing should also include avoiding physical contact and minimizing close, prolonged, face-to-face interactions, while spreading out as much as possible within the space available. There should be no crowding, gathering or congregating of people, even when non-medical masks are worn.

School principals and vice-principals have been provided with **updated COVID-19 health and safety checklists** to ensure they consistently follow provincial guidelines. Those are being reviewed with school and district health and safety committees.

For staff and families, the **daily health check** remains a requirement, as do hand washing, staying home if you're sick, and of course abiding by the requirements list above.

Additionally, to support daily screening, **a new K-12 health-checker app** has been developed for students and their families and can be found at: <https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca>. The app will allow people to answer simple questions every day. It will inform them if they can attend school or if they need to self-isolate and contact 811 to be screened for COVID-19.